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# **A Theology of Love and Temporal Justice**

**Gretar Gunnarsson**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**The University of Edinburgh**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis addresses the problematic of the relationship between Christian love and justice as it regards political structures and institutions. In doing so we hope contribute to a better understanding of the relationship that ought to pertain between the Christian church and political authorities. We make a distinction within the concept of justice, distinguishing between a more general loving justice and temporal justice which belongs specifically to political authorities and is reactive to loving justice. We argue that it cannot be maintained that love simply becomes temporal justice, in the sense that the justice of temporal authorities should be the same as the loving justice Christians proclaim and hope for. Neither is there the opposite, a peaceful boundary between love and temporal justice. This is because there is another criterion for the interrelationship between love and justice to be deduced from what will be established in the thesis. Temporal justice is the space created that allows love to be actualized. The nature and limits of this interaction between love and temporal justice will be explained and the spaces of temporal justice argued to be neither negative nor positive but rather suggestive. The thesis provides a descriptive framework for how the interaction between love and temporal justice takes place and posits the criteria that should guide political action and political judgment. The entire argument of the thesis is substantiated by conversation with certain key interlocutors who are all participants in a broader conversation that is defined in the thesis.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction *-The Thesis and Its Interlocutors-*

### A. The Context

#### *i. The Problem and the Question*

As is revealed in the Gospel-proclamation, God has determined himself as the one who both loves and is just. Therefore, those who stand under the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ understand themselves as the recipients of God's love and God's justice. As this gift is received there is initiated a reciprocal movement as the recipients are allowed and commanded to correspond to this great reception by themselves becoming loving and just. God is loving and just and, therefore, those cognizant of this will also seek, according to their creaturely potential, to become loving and just. Duncan B. Forrester has made a similar point: "Christians believe in a God of justice and of love; and more, they teach that God *is* justice as God is love. In our experience of God we encounter both love and justice and learn what they are. Christians therefore claim, however tentatively and provisionally, to know what justice is because God reveals himself in justice and love."<sup>1</sup>

But living in a reality that is both "already and not yet" the reality of the Gospel, we see only "through a glass darkly." Therefore, as we proceed as ethical actors, under the freedom and command to be loving and just, there is much that is unclear to us. Importantly, for our purposes, it is unclear what exactly, in each and every instance, is the content of as well as the difference and relationship between, love and justice.

This is a general problematic for human thinking and acting. This general problematic finds expression and a special formulation in the reality that is political structures and institutions. In that domain the question of love and justice is awoken in a special way, related to, but yet different from, the general formulation. There are two main reasons the general problematic is awoken in a special manner in the political domain.

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan B. Forrester, *Christian Justice and Public Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 205.

The first happens on the primary, doctrinal level of thinking through the implications of the Gospel-proclamation. On that level, we are, possibly, presented with a special way in which the central Gospel-concepts of promise and judgment relate to the realm of political authorities and political structures. If this is the case, it might have important results for our subsequent understanding of love and justice in political structures. This makes it important for us to ask the question concerning the relationship between love and justice in the political domain.

Second, there is the level on which the ethical agent, standing under the Gospel-proclamation, engages with a fallen reality which threatens, compromises, or otherwise troubles the actualization of the truth received in the Gospel. Being shaped by the Gospel's love and justice the ethical agent proceeds to create political structures and institutions to guard and assist the actualization of love and justice. However, in the process, the ethical agent is confronted with the neighbour who does not share his idea of love and justice and would therefore shape those structures differently. The strife, discord and conflict that arise in the subsequent interchange threaten the very peace and stability of the structures and institutions in question. The structures seem to replicate the very discord they are meant to overcome.

Therefore, for these two primary reasons, our intention is to understand the relationship of love and justice in political structures. On our way there we will need to inquire generally and individually into the concept of love and the concept of justice, especially regarding whether the concepts of justice and love function differently in the political domain. It follows that our enquiry is bifocal in nature, concerning itself with i) the general relationship of love and justice and ii) the special relationship of love and justice as regards political structures.

## ***ii. The Subject's Unfolding***

Before we engage with the central subjects of the thesis we need to understand the epistemological parameters within which subsequent theological ethics and political theology are to be conducted. Insofar as theological ethics and political theology concern themselves with many things external, the first chapter will be especially focused on the place of empirical and natural actualities regarding the procedures of theological ethics and political theology. Therefore, the thesis begins with the basic



determination regarding i) *natural theology* and ii) *revealed theology*, determining whether theology may or may not be guided by speculation based on empirical and natural actualities. The thesis will argue for upholding distinctions between the theological and natural speculative enterprises, thereby siding with understandings associated with revealed theology and ethics. This will be argued based on the decentring effects of the Gospel-revelation on human subjectivity as well as the way in which the proclamation of the Gospel re-centres human thought on itself. Having established these parameters we will confidently inquire into the central subject matters of this thesis, love and justice. First, we will look into the concept of love.

As we seek to understand the concept of Christian love, the concept will already present itself together with its antithesis, non-Christian love. These two concepts of love will be treated under the headings of *agape* and *eros*, with *agape* being the concept we will use for the distinctly Christian ideal of love while *eros* is placed in the domain of religious love. In order to understand the concept of love the thesis will seek to determine whether the concept of love, despite having this fundamental differentiation within itself, can be described as a unitary concept with a common point of reference. Importantly, it will be through understanding the unity or difference within the concept of love that we will come to understand its fundamental properties.

In thought, these two fundamental concepts of *eros* and *agape* could be related in several ways. They could be i) placed in stark *opposition*, ii) *synthesized* or iii) they could form a *unity*. However, we will, instead, discover iv) their *unity in opposition*, based on an analysis of their unity and their difference. *Eros* and *agape* will, indeed, present themselves as different forms of love, *eros* being propelled by projection and *agape* by reception, the former being primarily self-appropriating, the latter primarily self-giving. Nonetheless, within the conceptual tension between these two concepts, *eros* being assigned to religions generally and *agape* to the Christian faith, we will find a unity and likeness which makes it possible for us to put them both under the same signifier of love. Their unity is found in that both are to be described as actualization processes aimed primarily towards a potentiality which is found either in the projections of religious *eros* or in the reception of the Christian Gospel. We will thereby have discovered the common reference that gives love its

unity as a signifier. Also, we will recognize this unity as something which helps us to include in our view the neighbour with whom we share political structures but who nonetheless holds other ideals of love. We will therefore be able to continue speaking comfortably of the relationship between love and justice in political structures without great hindrance caused by the dissimilarity within the broader concept of love.

Having accomplished this understanding of the internal unity and opposition within the concept of love, we then need to understand love's unity with or distinction from that for which it strives, potentiality. This will give a more particular understanding of the nature, work and, especially, the limitations of love. The question therefore becomes whether love should be seen as i) *co-extensive* with potentiality or as ii) *distinct* from it. The thesis will see the two in a relationship which emphasizes a distinction, discovering that, because of the disunity and non-divine nature of human attributes, love and that which it seeks to accomplish cannot be directly correlated, which means that acts of love do not correspond to the direct actualization of potentiality. This will, furthermore, allow us to make a helpful distinction between the theological and more contextual forms of ethical judgments.

The question that arises next is whether justice is distinct from love and, if it is, in what way? We will discover in the *divine* attributes of love and justice a unity that, subsequently, finds its correspondence in a *human* unity between the concepts, which as we will see is an imperfect unity. The unity of love and justice will be found to be primarily in reference to the same process, the actualization of potentiality, which will also be where we will discover the correspondingly distinct nature of justice. This will be explained by an analogy to and a distinction from God's divine attributes. God can, in freedom, determine himself to be the one who loves and seeks humankind's potentiality and, by justice, defeat and destroy opposition to his will. But humankind cannot directly accomplish the potentiality that it seeks and cannot perfectly defeat the oppositions to the actualization of potentiality. Rather, while God directly creates the new reality and accomplishes the defeat of his opposition, humankind will content itself, by love, with creatively seeking to actualize potentiality and, by justice, limiting and curbing, so as to guard that which is actual. This in effect reflects differences in emphasis between love and

justice regarding their unity and reference to the same process of the actualization of potentiality, whereby love refers primarily to that which is potentiality and justice to that which is actual and yet deemed to be in correspondence or in the service of actuality. Their unity is, therefore, primarily, in reference to the same coherent process of actualization of potentiality. The distinction between love and justice, then, refers primarily to distinct aspects of this process. We will have found the two concepts to be in i) *a dual/complementary unity*, not in ii) *a subservient/derivate* role to one or the other, or in an unqualified iii) *interchangeable unity*.

These determinations will prepare us to engage with the core concern of love and justice in relation to political structures. The major extant understandings for construing this relationship posit either i) *no relationship* between love and temporal authorities, ii) *hostility* between love and temporal authorities or, finally, iii) *a gradualist dynamic* between love and temporal authorities. Of these alternatives, we will develop a position that is closest to the final understanding, but not without some qualifications. This is because, as we approach the question regarding love and justice in their relation with political structures, we will discover the peculiar nature of temporal authorities. This nature is peculiar because temporal authorities do not relate to potentiality and actualization or to promise and judgment as other realities do. What we find instead is a prescribed role for temporal authorities which refers to sin and disorder and other actualities that threaten the actualization of love. In the eschaton, as will be understood, there will be no such destructive manifestations and, therefore, no rationale for the legislations, enforcements, taxations, policing, and so on provided by temporal authorities. Indeed, this is why they are rightly called *temporal* authorities, in that they are meant only for the time being, to serve the actualization of love and justice, until the consummation of the eschaton. This means that it is possible for us to speak of a form of justice that is peculiar to temporal authorities and which receives its grounding and shape from the movements of love and justice as well as the actualities of sin and disorder.

Therefore, temporal justice has a reactive relationship to love and justice and is shaped by interaction with love and justice. In fact, the metaphor we choose to describe the functioning of temporal justice is that it is the space created and upheld so that loving justice can actualize within it. In searching for more detailed criteria

for the interaction between temporal justice and love we will learn, however, to understand that their interrelationship is more than strictly mechanical. Although temporal justice is described as a space in which love actualizes and is said to react to its movements, it will be recognized that representatives of temporal authorities, as human beings, will necessarily make judgments concerning the truth content of the ideals of love in question. However, these evaluations of specific ideals of love, as we will find, cannot be the primary criteria of judgment without threatening the possibility of a mistaken political judgment, leading to the totalization of a false ideal of love.

Therefore, the primary criterion of political judgment will be the general relationship of temporal authorities to love, with the specific judgment on the truth content of specific ideas of love functioning as a secondary criterion. Following this we will learn that this entails that sequences of judgments, according to this dual criterion, accrue to form i) *suggestive spaces* but not ii) *negative spaces* or iii) *overdetermined spaces*. We will thereby have described the relationship between love and the justice of political structures as well as deriving criteria to guide this form of justice. To come back to the twofold focus of the thesis we will have, first, provided an understanding of the general relationship between love and justice as unitary insofar as they refer to the same process of actualization while attributing their conceptual difference to their having a primary emphasis on distinct aspects of that process. Second, we will have provided an understanding of the relationship between love and justice in temporal political structures. Temporal justice will be described as a special type of justice, one that reacts to love, and is best explained as the space in which love can be actualized. This analysis will yield criteria for better guidance in political judgment and action.

### ***iii. An Argument Substantiated by Interlocutors***

In order to substantiate and complete the following arguments, we will also be interacting with a particular scholarly debate concerning political theology which has been taking place in the Anglophone world in recent decades. This extended conversation will be addressed in almost every chapter of the dissertation. There is good reason to engage with this well-known Anglophone debate: 1) The debate is

circumscribed by Reinhold Niebuhr's opening position and a literature that arose in response to Niebuhr, giving it a distinct, limited framework of writings and interlocutors. 2) Reinhold Niebuhr and the conversation that he started strongly emphasized the notions of love and justice that are the focal concepts of the present thesis. 3) It could be argued that this on-going, lively debate poses certain fundamental dilemmas and questions on which Christians have disagreed over the centuries in a new light. This Anglophone debate with which we will be interacting with will be mapped out as falling broadly into three camps: i) realist political theologies, ii) radical political theologies, and iii) gradualist political theologies. Several parties to the conversation will be mentioned but three will receive a special attention: Reinhold Niebuhr, Stanley Hauerwas and Oliver O'Donovan. The conversation, as mentioned, arose largely in reaction to Niebuhr's writing and influence and concerns itself largely, as does this thesis, with love and justice and the relationship of the Christian faith to temporal politics.

Therefore, the applicability and strength of the argument advanced in this dissertation will be measured against the major contributors to this on-going Anglophone debate on matters of political theology. It will also provide a coherent critique of the various schools of thought and a concrete way forward out of any stalemate that may have developed in that debate. This will, most importantly, act as proof of the relevancy, strength and viability of the proposal made in the thesis concerning the relationship that ought to pertain between love and justice in political structures. Therefore, at this point, before we move on to the constructive arguments of the thesis, we will provide an overview of how our conversation partners figure into the question of the relationship between love and justice. This will not only help us understand our interactions with them over the course of the thesis but also provide a very helpful context for the thesis and its own constructive arguments. It will, furthermore, help us understand more fully the dilemmas and stalemates that political theology faces in addressing our subject. Given the bifocal nature of our enquiry—concerning itself with both i) the relationship between love and justice generally and ii) the relationship of love and justice to political structures—we will construct our overview with this in mind. Each of the three abovementioned schools

of political theology will be presented so as to show where they figure on that bifocal axis.

## **B. The Interlocutors**

### ***i. Realist Political Theologies***

The story of the extended conversation which we are entering begins with and is propelled by Reinhold Niebuhr and his sounding a note of what he called “Christian Realism.” The influence of this account of political theology was to extend widely and have direct implications for many subsequent conceptualizations of love and justice. Niebuhr claimed to have learned Christian Realism from church father Saint Augustine.<sup>2</sup> In Niebuhr’s opinion Augustine had a deeply realistic view of human nature. Unlike the rationalists of the prior age or the social scientists of the modern age, Augustine presented human reason as corrupted by self-love which, in Niebuhr’s view, was an astute observation. Accepting this as a true axiom would, subsequently, impose a distinctive shape on Niebuhr’s own theology. The resulting inference from the axiom is that self-interest is infused in *all* the rational pursuits of humankind. Self-interest can, of course, often unify human community. It is also, however, deeply divisive and creates mistrust, suspicion, and a rift between peoples. As a result of this actuality of self-interest and self-love, Niebuhr saw the human condition as constantly involving an “uneasy armistice between contending forces.”<sup>3</sup> The important practical inference for Niebuhr is that, as a result, we must let go of naïve optimism and face the sobering reality concerning human nature and government. We cannot lose ourselves in thinking of the “ultimate possibilities of life, for which sacrificial and forgiving love is the norm, but must also come to terms with the problem of establishing tolerable harmonies of life on all levels of community.”<sup>4</sup> The question is what this “sobering view” might entail for the Christian ideal of love, or for that matter any ideal of love.

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<sup>2</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1953), 120–21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>4</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Problem of a Protestant Social Ethic,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 15 (1959): 1–2. Quoted from: D. B. Robertson, “Introduction,” in Reinhold Niebuhr, *Love and Justice: Selection from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr*, ed. D. B. Robertson, Library of Theological Ethics (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1957), 9.

This in effect entails that, from the Christian realist perspective, politics cannot be a simple idealistic enterprise, concerning itself solely with ultimate values or pure expressions of love. First and foremost, Niebuhr thought, politics should focus on that which has actuality in the lives of all citizens—self-interest and the common human need for material goods.<sup>5</sup> Such a thought will clearly have a strong effect on the perceived relationship between love and structures of justice. To many it might seem that this results in the drawing of a clear boundary between the two. The instinct behind that deduction is solid. But it is not the whole story of the Niebuhrian understanding of love and justice, which is slightly more nuanced than that. Let us first look at the general relationship between love and justice in Niebuhr's work and then investigate their specific relation to political structures.

### **a. The General Relationship between Love and Justice**

Within Niebuhr's schema of thought, justice is associated primarily with concrete political institutions while love has an elevated place and cannot be directly actualised in political institutions without compromise. There is, however, another distinction concerning the concepts of love and justice to be found in Niebuhr's work that is not accented to the extent it could be, which is the parallel distinction between, on the one hand, perfect/ideal love and perfect/ideal justice, and, on the other hand, love and justice as they are found in the strictly political sense. The concepts of perfect love and perfect justice are, nonetheless, spawned out of the primary attention Niebuhr gives to the ideal of love in its interaction with justice in politics, as our treatment below will show.

The love that finds its way into the messy reality of politics is, in the process of entering this reality, changed. By entering into this imperfect reality, love is compromised and loses its character as ideal/perfect love. Niebuhr maintains that in our fallen reality "the social struggle involves a violation of a pure ethic of love, not

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<sup>5</sup> Niebuhr writes approvingly of Augustine that "Augustine's realism prompts him to challenge Cicero's conception of a commonwealth as rooted in 'a compact of justice.' Not so, declares Augustine. Commonwealths are bound together by a common love, or collective interest, rather than by a sense of justice: and they could not maintain themselves without the imposition of power." See Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems*, 126.

only in the assertion of rights, but in the inevitable use of coercion.”<sup>6</sup> This means that, according to Niebuhr, love is compromised in its entry into historical reality although, in making this entrance, it does not cease to be love. As Niebuhr states, “the social ideal of Jesus is as perfect and as impossible of attainment as is his personal ideal.” Niebuhr adds that, in “the ethical teachings of Jesus . . . we discover an unattainable ideal, but a very useful one.”<sup>7</sup>

Based on this, our inference must be that there is a love which is the measure of the love which finds itself compromised in entering into the historical situation. That is, there is a perfect love which can be distinguished from love in its actual compromise with historical reality. And, as will be better explained later, this imperfect love is vital for the development of *imperfect justice*. What is important for us to note now is that there is a concept of imperfect justice to be found in Niebuhr’s work. We have already explained how love becomes imperfect in its compromise with fallen reality. But how can justice be said to be imperfect? According to Niebuhr, we know that justice is made better, more perfect, with the activity of love. The process of perfecting justice through love implies the imperfection of justice.

Let us explain the rationale behind this statement. According to Niebuhr, the justice we have in history is tainted, like other historical realities, by the fact that this is a fallen reality, still plagued by selfishness and other human faults. Furthermore, this imperfect justice, standing by itself, quickly degenerates into something less than justice. It “always develops into injustice in actual life because every person views rights not from an absolute but from a biased perspective. The result is a society in which the perspective of the strong dictates the conception of justice.”<sup>8</sup> Niebuhr continues: “Justice, in other words, that is only justice is less than justice. Only imaginative justice, that love that begins by espousing the rights of the other rather than self, can achieve a modicum of fairness.”<sup>9</sup> That justice needs love so as not to degenerate into its opposite shows us how love is, without ceasing to be love, compromised and then translated into achievements of justice. As love enters historical reality, it is compromised, but still elevates justice, making it in its

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<sup>6</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “The Ethic of Jesus and the Social Problem,” in *Love and Justice*, 35.

<sup>7</sup> Niebuhr, “The Ethic of Jesus and the Social Problem,” 32–33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*



dynamic with love more perfect. Justice is elevated in its dynamic with love so as to become more perfected. This entails that the achievements of justice are imperfect and yet, through love, they are in the process of being perfected. The inevitable question then is when and how easily justice reaches its perfection to become “perfect justice.” According to Niebuhr, in history, that is, before the eschaton, justice will most likely never become perfect justice. Simply put: Perfect justice will never actualize in any political systems, however advanced. Concerning this Niebuhr argues: “Such a system will not meet the requirements of perfect justice for decades to come. There is a sense in which it will probably never meet them.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Niebuhr states: “Whatever justice men achieve in the society in which they live is always imperfect justice.”<sup>11</sup>

The important message for us to note here is that we have seen how, within Niebuhr’s writings, there is the necessary inference that there is such a thing as perfect justice to contrast with imperfect justice, just as there is perfect love to contrast with imperfect, compromised love. But what, then, is the relationship between perfect love and perfect justice? Niebuhr has a short but definitive response to that question: “anything short of love cannot be perfect justice.”<sup>12</sup> What appears is that what Niebuhr calls “perfect justice” is just another word for the ideal of love. Therefore, in their general relationship, as perfect ideals, love and justice are closely related. However, when we investigate the difference between love and justice in political institutions, we discover a much greater differentiation between these concepts.

### **b. The Relationship of Love and Justice in Political Structures**

We find greater differentiation in looking to the relationship between love and justice as they relate to political institutions because this is where the two concepts do the most work in Niebuhr’s writings. Interestingly, the more deeply we investigate Niebuhr’s writings the clearer it becomes that this justice of political institutions, in terms of the expression of the ideal, is different from perfect love/perfect justice not

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<sup>10</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “American Power and World Responsibility,” in *Love and Justice*, 205.

<sup>11</sup> Niebuhr, “The Ethic of Jesus and the Social Problem,” 32.

<sup>12</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Christian Faith and Natural Law,” in *Love and Justice*, 49.

in type but in degree. It turns out that the imperfect, complex situations that abound in politics demand a compromise in the pure expression of love. Niebuhr claims that “even if perfect love were presupposed, complex relations, involving more than two persons, require the calculation of rights.”<sup>13</sup> Justice (Niebuhr most always uses the term “justice” by itself when referring to the imperfect justice of political institutions) is, therefore, the virtue that is needed because *perfect love* cannot be realized in our sinful condition without, at the same time, supporting forms of sin and oppression.

This may seem a somewhat strange claim but here Niebuhr argues simply that, by engaging in pure, self-sacrificial love on the level of nations, classes and other groups, we could be foregoing the claims, interests and needs of other people.<sup>14</sup> The more complex the moral situation, the more parties there are to an issue, the more important it becomes to compromise the demands of ideal love to achieve relative, imperfect justice. As Niebuhr writes: “This new life in Christ represents the perfection of complete and heedless self-giving which obscures the contrary impulse of self-regard. It is a moral ideal scarcely possible for the individual and certainly not relevant to the morality of self-regarding nations.”<sup>15</sup> In the complex situations of politics love has to face the reality of interests and rights and power and seek the advancement of justice. This imperfect justice, which is the justice that should be practiced in our human condition, is well described as the “best possible harmony within the conditions created by human egoism.”<sup>16</sup> Perfect justice and perfect love are both *primarily* ideals and can easily become destructive when they are acted out abstractly. Focusing on the realities of communal and individual interest will help us address conflicts more effectively and find a more fitting justice for, as Niebuhr makes clear, “any justice that the world has ever achieved rests upon some balance between the various interests.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 2 (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1996), 252.

<sup>14</sup> Niebuhr writes: “For as soon as the life and interest of other than the agent are involved in an action or a policy, the sacrifice of those interests ceases to be ‘self-sacrifice.’ It may actually become an unjust betrayal of their interests.” Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 88. See also Karen Lebacqz, *Six Theories of Justice: Perspectives from Philosophical and Theological Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 84.

<sup>15</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Man’s Nature and His Communities* (London: Bles, 1966), 30.

<sup>16</sup> Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 252.

<sup>17</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “A Negotiated Peace,” in *Love and Justice*, 173.

But the emphasis on realism, interests and the calculation of rights in political institutions would seem to minimize to the greatest degree the interrelationship between love and justice. This raises a legitimate question. It could be said that Niebuhr limits the role of love, thereby risking the privatization of Christian love and causing it to become irrelevant to concrete political situations.

However, such judgments of Niebuhr's work are not entirely accurate. Niebuhr did visualize that self-sacrificial love could enter unexpectedly into political stalemates and thereby create new possibilities. Even so, however, this would, according to Niebuhr, always be strongly qualified by the realities of the human condition of self-interest, power, coercion and egoism:

The spirit of love may preserve a certain degree of appreciation for the common weaknesses and common aspirations which bind men together above the areas of social conflict. But again it cannot prevent the conflict. It may avail itself of instruments of restraint and coercion, through which a measure of trust in the moral capacities of an opponent may be expressed and the expansion rather than contraction of those capacities is encouraged. But it cannot hide the moral distrust expressed by the very use of the instruments of coercion. To some degree the conflict between the purest individual morality and an adequate political policy must therefore remain.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, Niebuhr's affirmation of a place for perfect love in the justice of political institutions might be too little, too late, as can be seen by the fact that Niebuhr was to become heavily criticized later in the century. But before this critique was levelled against him, Niebuhr nonetheless captivated the hearts and minds of many and set the tone for discussions in the twentieth century on the relationship between love and justice, becoming a favourite of scholars, activists and statesmen. The young philosopher John Rawls showed affinities for Niebuhr's works,<sup>19</sup> as did civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr.<sup>20</sup> Niebuhr's influence was, however, not tied to that period of history; the U.S. president, Barack Obama, has called Reinhold Niebuhr his

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<sup>18</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Scribner, 1934), 272–273.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, "The Theological Ethics of the Young Rawls and its Background," in *A Brief Inquiry into the Meaning of Sin and Faith*, ed. Thomas Nagel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 74–78.

<sup>20</sup> King was both appreciative and critical of Niebuhr. See: Martin Luther King, "Reinhold Niebuhr's Ethical Dualism," in *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson et al., vol. 2 (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 141–151.

“favourite philosopher.”<sup>21</sup> But Niebuhr’s spreading influence only amplified the criticism against him, particularly in the critique made by “radical theologians.”

## ***ii. Radical Political Theologies***

In the last decades of the twentieth century, critics who argued that Niebuhr’s realism was in fact dangerously “accommodationist” emerged.<sup>22</sup> They charged that there was too little that was distinctively Christian in Niebuhr’s arguments. The English theologian John Milbank has even suggested that Niebuhr’s thought might be said to resemble Stoic philosophy more than it does Christian theology.<sup>23</sup> Another radical theologian, Stanley Hauerwas, has argued that churches that would follow the realist theological agenda would wind up having “nothing distinctive to say *as Christians* about the challenges facing this society” [italics mine].<sup>24</sup> This is seen, for example, in Niebuhr’s claim that “the law of love stands on the edge of history, not in history.”<sup>25</sup> Such a statement functions, in Stanley Hauerwas’s view, as a theological justification of the social “irrelevance of Christianity.”<sup>26</sup> Placing the law of love outside the actualities of history results, according to Hauerwas, in sidelining the church (a community of love) in the affairs of the world. For, if love is placed at the edge of history, the church’s concrete social practices of love might as well be excluded from the realm of politics and placed “at the edge of history.”

In the opinion of the radical theologians, it is Niebuhr’s idea of imperfect justice that reigns in history while love is pushed to the side. Hauerwas believes that this has terrible consequences: “as a result, ‘peace’ for Niebuhr can never mean an attempt to rid the world of war; rather, it is a word for ‘order’ that too often serves the interest of status quo powers. If you are for justice, therefore, you cannot exclude

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<sup>21</sup> In an interview with the New York Times, U.S. President Barack Obama was asked by the journalist David Brooks if he had ever read Reinhold Niebuhr, to which Obama remarked, “I love him. He is one of my favorite philosophers.” President Obama then expanded on the nature of his affinity with Niebuhr. “Obama, Gospel and Verse,” by David Brooks, *The New York Times*, April 26, 2007, [http://select.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/opinion/26brooks.html?\\_r=1](http://select.nytimes.com/2007/04/26/opinion/26brooks.html?_r=1)

<sup>22</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 32.

<sup>23</sup> John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 235–239.

<sup>24</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *A Better Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2000), 25.

<sup>25</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1996), 298.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 54.

the use of violence and war. In effect, Niebuhr gave a theological justification for political realism.”<sup>27</sup> The main thrust of the radical theological critique is, therefore, that the theories of realist political theology leave the church and Christian love without a concrete vocation in the world. All that is left for the church to do is bemoan the tragic necessity of the way things are—thereby legitimating the way things are. According to Hauerwas, “the sharp division between the realms of religion and politics intrinsic to [Christian] realism served to free liberal political institutions to follow their own interests, qualified only by the hope that they will recognize the ambiguity of what they do.” Echoing John Milbank’s earlier charge, Hauerwas continues: “[Niebuhr] proclaimed an essentialized view of the human condition and a parallel reification of the state that shut out any role in the world for the church. He, like the Stoics before him, left us without hope.”<sup>28</sup>

The radical political theologies have espoused a vision very different from that of the realists. It is a vision wherein the Church embodies a special political vision or praxis, serving as a light to the world that the world could learn and follow. Hauerwas writes:

The church does not let the world set its agenda about what constitutes a “social ethic,” but a church of peace and justice must set its own agenda. It does this first by having the patience amid the injustice and violence of this world to care for the widow, the poor, and the orphan. Such care, from the world’s perspective, may seem to contribute little to the cause of justice, yet it is our conviction that unless we take the time for such care neither we nor the world can know what justice looks like.<sup>29</sup>

The law of love is supposed to reign in politics and the political domain should not be exempt from the demands of love as witnessed to by the church. Christian discipleship, the radical political theologies maintain, should be just as actual for a Christian in government as for a Christian in private life as they reject any

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<sup>27</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front: Theological Engagements with the Secular* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 142.

<sup>28</sup> Hauerwas, *Wilderness Wanderings*, 58

<sup>29</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics,” in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 374–375. John Milbank strikes a somewhat similar note: “In the midst of history the judgment of God has already happened. And either the church enacts the vision of paradisaal community which this judgment opens out, or else it promotes a hellish society beyond any terrors known to antiquity.” See John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 442.

public/private distinctions.<sup>30</sup> They claim that there can be no special ethic that applies to our personal lives and yet another that should apply to public offices or democratic discussions. It is standing on this ground that the radical theologians are able to describe Niebuhr and the realists as contributors to “the democratic policing of Christianity” and the divorce of Christian beliefs from concrete living.<sup>31</sup> Having given this preliminary description of the radical political theologies, let us now consider how they figure onto our twofold foci, beginning with the general relationship between love and justice.

### **a. The General Relationship between Love and Justice**

It is true that sometimes Hauerwas and Milbank might not always seem to be the greatest enthusiasts of justice.<sup>32</sup> However, this does not mean that they are out to reject justice wholesale. Their reservations are held mostly in reaction to certain modern abstract *usages* of the concept of justice which they find to be uninformed by the Christian faith. This will be explained more extensively later when we examine the special relationship between love and justice in political institutions as seen by Hauerwas and Milbank.

Importantly, Hauerwas and Milbank do have a place for justice as a general Christian concept. They mention it favourably, just as they treat equality and freedom and similar concepts favourably. For them, however, the important work to be done is reminding us that our notions of these concepts should be wholly informed by the Christian vision and Christian practices because, according to Hauerwas, every concept, such as justice, is tradition-bound and should therefore not be vague or abstract: concepts “are not self-interpreting, but require a tradition to give them specificity and content.”<sup>33</sup> Hauerwas claims that when the traditional nature of such concepts is not emphasized, “love and justice become abstractions divorced from concrete practices necessary for Christians and non-Christians alike to

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<sup>30</sup> Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, “Ethics as Informed Prayer,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front*, 98–104.

<sup>32</sup> Servicing this view, Hauerwas includes a chapter titled “The Politics of Justice – Why Justice is a Bad Idea for Christians.” See Stanley Hauerwas, *After Christendom: How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice and Christian Nation Are Bad Ideas* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 45–68.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “The Servant Community,” 389.

know what we mean when we say ‘justice.’”<sup>34</sup> Milbank takes a similar stance, although differently conceptualized because of his emphasis on ontology combined with praxis. The resemblance is, nonetheless, strong: “Christian belief belongs to Christian practice, and it sustains its affirmations about God and creation only by repeating and enacting a metanarrative about how God speaks in the world in order to redeem it.”<sup>35</sup>

This Christian metanarrative, according to Milbank, amounts to a “social ontology” wherein concepts such as justice receive their context and content. According to both Hauerwas and Milbank, the tradition that should guide our visualizations and practices should be the Christian tradition. So it is that for both Hauerwas and Milbank love and justice are bound together in a common wellspring of Christian tradition, narrative and ontology. Insofar as our concepts of love and justice should be grounded in the tapestry that is the Christian tradition, we may next ask what is central in the ethical tradition and ontology of Christianity, according to Hauerwas and Milbank.

It is here that the question becomes more interesting. Not only are concepts such as love and justice in a unity of tradition, praxis and ontology, but we also discover that for both authors it is non-violence that plays a central role and it is non-violence that we must see as the uniting principle of Christian love and Christian justice. According to Hauerwas, God in Jesus, in rejecting the dominion offered to him by the devil, “decisively rejects Israel’s temptation to an idolatry that necessarily results in violence between peoples and nations. For our violence is correlative to the falseness of the objects we worship and the more false they are, the greater our stake in maintaining loyalty to them and protecting them through coercion. Only the one true God can take the risk of ruling by relying entirely on the power of humility and love.”<sup>36</sup> Love and justice are unitary in God’s non-violent overcoming of the opposition to his kingdom. For, as Hauerwas writes: “True justice never comes through violence, nor can it be based on violence. It can only be based on truth,

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<sup>34</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), 230.

<sup>35</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 422.

<sup>36</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 79.

which has no need to resort to violence to secure its own existence.”<sup>37</sup> Milbank has a similar understanding, as he distinguishes sharply between ontologies of dominion and violence wherein justice is upheld by coercion and an ontology of peace wherein love and justice are harmonious in non-violence. Milbank, by way of Augustine, draws “a contrast between a certain kind of limited, apparent peace, consequent upon the victory of a dominant force over other forces, and a real peace, which is a state of harmonious agreement, based upon a common love, and a realization of justice for all.”<sup>38</sup>

All this means that, for these two authors, love and justice have unity, first in their common grounding in the Christian tradition/narrative/ontology, and second in the specific, but central, aspect of that tradition, which is the peaceableness and non-violence derived from the Christian proclamation of a God who, in Jesus, has overcome by non-violence.<sup>39</sup> This highlighting of non-violence as a central aspect of Christianity creates a more tensely strained relationship between the Christian ideas of love and justice when applied to political structures and institutions.

### **b. The Relationship of Love and Justice in Political Structures**

What we should recognize here is that both Hauerwas’s and Milbank’s projects reject the view that temporal politics are as important in human affairs as they are typically assumed to be. “Politics” for Hauerwas and Milbank refers primarily to a communal existence and its traditions. They do not view politics primarily as structural, but rather as communal, moral and visionary. They focus first and foremost on the church as politics in its own right. As Hauerwas writes:

I am challenging the very idea that the primary goal of Christian social ethics should be an attempt to make the world more peaceable or just. Rather, *the first social ethical task of the church is to be the church—the servant community*. Such a claim may well sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceable kingdom in the world. *As such, the church does not have a social ethic; the church is a social ethic.*<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 114–115.

<sup>38</sup> Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 393.

<sup>39</sup> Hauerwas, *Peaceable Kingdom*, 79.

<sup>40</sup> Hauerwas, “The Servant Community,” 374. Emphasis in the original.



Hauerwas and Milbank are, if anything, reluctant to answer questions as to how the church is to relate to temporal political social policy. They are primarily out to remind us that without a distinctive community of the church that deeply nurtures its own praxis and ontology of love, justice, freedom and equality, we have no hope of knowing what these concepts rightly mean. Hauerwas writes, concerning this point: “Put in terms that have now become familiar, freedom and equality are not self-interpreting, but require a tradition to give them specificity and content.”<sup>41</sup> If the church does not nurture its narratives, traditions, and ontology, these concepts will lack context and content to the extent that they will become general and abstract to the point of being useless. It is even possible that these concepts will become nothing more than dangerous allies of violence and coercion. That was, amongst other things, the accusation brought against Niebuhr by Hauerwas and Milbank. Love and justice cannot mean one thing in church and another thing in temporal politics.<sup>42</sup> If the justice we speak of in temporal government is just another way to legitimate war, violence and coercion, how can it be justice? And how can Christians participate in such politics?

This primary emphasis that Milbank and Hauerwas place on the utter distinctiveness of the church must result in an unstable relationship of Christian love to the justice found in temporal politics. If political institutions work according to criteria that do not perfectly harmonize with the non-violent understanding of love and justice that Milbank and Hauerwas espouse, then how are Christians to participate in it without, at the same time, compromising their praxis/ontology? This is a legitimate question given the structures of their respective theological projects.

So, while love and justice are in general bound together in the Christian praxis, proclamation and ontology of non-violence, Hauerwas and Milbank seriously doubt whether the concept of justice often employed in political institutions is compatible with the Christian idea of justice.<sup>43</sup> One could even go so far as to say that it is altogether uncertain whether such justice is rightly called justice. This could

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>42</sup> Hauerwas calls the distinction between public and private a “yet another binary distinction that misrepresents the call of the gospel and the nature of the Christian life.” See Hauerwas and Wells, “Ethics as Informed Prayer,” 6.

<sup>43</sup> Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 45–68. John Milbank describes the corruption of politics in history leading up to modern times as something brought about by a failure of the church, resulting in a secular state in the form of “a perverted church.” See Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 440–442.

possibly breed an attitude of “overcoming or retreat” in the relationship between Christian love and the justice of political institutions: Either the Christian ethic becomes social policy, without compromise, or the Christian is forced to retreat to the only true politics of the church, so that, at least, the world might rightly know what love and justice truly are. The problem the radical theologians have with the former alternative is that they believe that the coercion and violence inherent in government structures are sinful (a betrayal of the demands of Christian love) and ought not to exist.<sup>44</sup> One could then legitimately ask whether there is any hope for an amicable relationship between Christian love and the justice of political institutions.

The relationship between love and justice, for the radical political theologies, obviously differs sharply from that of the realist theologians. While the realists would tend to maintain a more peaceful boundary between love and justice, the radical theologians can be said, without overstatement, to place the two in a less friendly relationship. Love has ruptured into the world and the negotiated terms of the realists are not an option. Given the radical theologians’ somewhat non-compromising view of the church and Christian discipleship, it becomes obvious that if the state does not support the right *telos* it becomes an argument for Christian withdrawal from public affairs.

Interestingly, both these prominent radical theologians have been very vocal critics of the common, Western, liberal–democratic order and are widely read. As a result of being widely read, the ideas and criticism of the radical theologians have created their own sphere of influence. Some even truly worry that, as time passes, the

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<sup>44</sup> Hauerwas has, to some extent, contested this. He has claimed that violence is not necessary or essential to the state and therefore the Christian need not withdraw altogether from the secular order. However, he does maintain that Christians cannot have any hand in governmental actions that can be considered violent: “but I do not believe it entails an indiscriminate rejection of the secular order. Rather, I maintain that Christians must withdraw their support from a ‘civic republicanism only’ when that form (as well as any other form) of government and society resorts to violence in order to maintain internal order and external security. At that point and that point alone Christians must withhold their involvement with the state. Such an admission, however, hardly commits me to a sectarian stance, unless one assumes, as some do, that every function of the state depends on its penchant for violence.” See Stanley Hauerwas, “Why the Sectarian Temptation is a Misrepresentation: A Response to James Gustafson,” in *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 105. There are two obvious problems with this stance. First, we are still left with a problem of definition concerning what counts as violence. Do we employ wide or narrow definitions? Almost every law and regulation could be considered violent if it is defined widely enough. Second, one wonders what it is about non-violence alone that singles it out as the one non-negotiable demand of Christian discipleship and Christian love. Are there not a host of other distinctively Christian actions that should not be compromised?

influences of radical theologies might become problematic. Jeffrey Stout writes: “We are about to reap the social consequences of a traditionalist backlash against contractarian liberalism.”<sup>45</sup> The more thoroughly Rawlsian our law schools and ethics centers become, the more radically Hauerwasian the theological schools become.”<sup>46</sup>

Stout has also pointed out that the inflated rhetoric and extreme characterizations of Milbank and Hauerwas are not completely warranted, given their own respective frameworks of thought. He sincerely questions Hauerwas’s apparent view that there can be no dynamic between love and justice,<sup>47</sup> and puts the question to Milbank whether God cannot be seen at work in any non-Christian, secular movements and individuals.<sup>48</sup> These are indeed criticisms and questions that should be taken seriously.

### ***iii. Gradualist Theologies***

Some remain unsatisfied not only with the understandings of realist political theologies but also with the radical alternatives just described. Here they shall be called “gradualist” theologians and, for them, Oliver O’Donovan should be seen as the most important figure, although Eric Gregory will also be treated under that label. An investigation of O’Donovan’s writings reveals that he does share some of the thinking habits of the radical theologians such as John Milbank. This can be seen in his use of patristic, medieval and pre-modern political thought. Also, like radical theologians, he might be said to hold a high view of the church and its moral character while simultaneously being critically disposed towards worldly government. Nonetheless, there is a great difference between O’Donovan and the radical theologians. He does not share Hauerwas’s or Milbank’s hostility to the idea that there is a viable relationship between the Church and liberal–democratic states. Instead there is, in O’Donovan’s thought, a form of continuity between church and state as there is a “Yes” that needs to be spoken to the state together with the “No”

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<sup>45</sup> In his book *Democracy and Tradition*, Jeffrey Stout labels Hauerwas and Milbank “new traditionalists.” See Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 118.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>47</sup> In fact, Stout quotes early writings in which Hauerwas puts a similar question to John Howard Yoder. See *ibid.*, 144–7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

that is due to it.<sup>49</sup> The state, O'Donovan thinks, needs its own criterion of justice and this justice cannot be a free-floating concept. Rather, a specific historical identity should govern the state in its organization and actions and the church should preach to the state what it believes should be the content of this justice.<sup>50</sup> The justice that the state practices and upholds needs to be informed by something, and this "something," Christians are to hope, should be the Christian proclamation.<sup>51</sup>

The question that then becomes urgent is what shape this influence should take. O'Donovan lays the answer out and suggests neither the "all or nothing" of the radical theologians nor the "almost nothing" of the realist theologians but rather argues that there should be an ongoing dynamic between love and structures of temporal justice.<sup>52</sup> With this introduction to the gradualist approach let us examine the relationship between love and justice in the writings of the gradualist political theologies by applying the schema of the twin foci as we have done so far, beginning by portraying the general relationship between love and justice.

### **a. The General Relationship between Love and Justice**

Oliver O'Donovan has a treatment of the general notions of love and justice which present the two concepts in a unity. More can, however, be said of this. The unity is upheld, shaped, and permeated by love because all the virtues have their unity, not in justice or the good, but in love. O'Donovan writes that "love is the unitary

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<sup>49</sup> O'Donovan writes: "Where God has said 'Yes' to mankind in Christ, he has said 'No' to all refusal of him, to the rebellious authorities, which as the psalmist has it, 'the Lord laughs to scorn.'" See O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 255. Also, in *The Desire of the Nations*, O'Donovan writes: "the witness is vindicated when it is carried through in a positive mode, saying yes as well as saying no, encouraging the acts of repentance and change by which the powers offer homage to Christ." Oliver O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 215.

<sup>50</sup> O'Donovan writes: "The key to the state's fulfilling of its role, then, is the church's proclamation to it, 'reminding' it." O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 213. O'Donovan also writes: "The [church's] penitential system could not, of course, replace the secular courts, but it could, and did, shape them." *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>51</sup> O'Donovan writes: "The secular function in society was to witness to divine judgment by, as it were, holding the stage for it; the church, on the other hand, must witness to divine judgment by no judgment, avoiding litigation and swallowing conflict in forgiveness. Society, respecting the judicial function as the core of political authority, must shape its conception of justice in the light of God's reconciling work." *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>52</sup> O'Donovan writes: "The reshaping of justice by mercy cannot reach a final settlement, but will always be a dialectic in which the ongoing forgiveness of the wronged has a dynamic effect." This is a thought that O'Donovan takes from reading William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice*. See *ibid.*, 261.

orientation that lies behind all uniquely varied responses to the generic variety of the created order.”<sup>53</sup> O’Donovan further comments:

True virtue is love for God, and the four cardinal virtues are manifestations of this love in certain typical relations into which human existence leads us. Temperance is the loving subject preserving himself unspoilt for God; fortitude is his glad endurance of all for God’s sake; justice is his stance of subordination before God and command over the non-human creation; and prudence is his discrimination between that which helps and that which hinders his pilgrimage towards God.<sup>54</sup>

Importantly, within O’Donovan’s writings, this unity is seen as a human unity of human attributes in the temporal and are therefore not in the perfect and divine unity that belongs only to God: “The clemency of human judgment cannot be like divine mercy, making all things new; it can only be a response to it, founded in humility, gratitude and fellow-feeling with sinners. It can only point, it cannot reach, to the place where justice and mercy are entirely one.”<sup>55</sup> It can therefore be said that, within O’Donovan’s scheme, love and justice have a unity, secured by love. In reference to God this is a perfect and divine unity while in the human reference it is an imperfect unity.

Eric Gregory has a similar interpretation of the unity of love and justice, although it exhibits slightly less nuance in arguing for a more strongly accented “hypostatic union” between love and justice. Gregory writes, for example, that love and justice are “without confusion, without change, without division, without separation, the difference of the natures being by no means removed because of the union.”<sup>56</sup> Despite claiming this equality of the concepts, the priority of love nonetheless emerges in Gregory’s writings, as it does for O’Donovan. Gregory claims that, despite this union, “nevertheless, love could be seen as the condition for the possibility of justice.”<sup>57</sup> We therefore find, with the gradualist political theologies, a general notion of the relationship between love and justice which keeps them in a union within which love has a certain priority. With this in mind, let us

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<sup>53</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 224.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>55</sup> O’Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 260.

<sup>56</sup> Eric Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 178.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.

now consider the specific relationship of love to the justice of political institutions as it appears in the writings of the gradualists.

### **b. The Relationship of Love and Justice in Political Structures**

The gradualist political theologies construe a relationship between love and the justice of political institutions that places the two in a dynamic. In this dynamic, political judgments and institutions can be said to take on the shape of the Gospel-love (particularly mercy for O'Donovan but more generally love for Gregory.) Let us explain this in greater detail. As we follow O'Donovan's treatment of the relationship between love and the justice of political institutions we see how it is most commonly construed by him as the relationship between mercy and justice. This is already apparent in our description of the general relationship between love and justice, for two reasons. First, the confrontation with God's mercy not only gives us a desire to emulate it but creates humility in us as we learn that we are recipients of mercy.<sup>58</sup> Second, the permeation of justice by love, as the guarantor of the unity of the virtues, means that justice takes a different direction from the direction it would take without it. Justice is, therefore, as O'Donovan likes to see it, better described as "merciful judgment."<sup>59</sup> Importantly, this merciful judgment "is a qualification, not a suspension of justice."<sup>60</sup> Awareness of God's judgment changes how we engage in judgments, tempering them with love's mercy and forgiveness. As O'Donovan writes: "The nearness of divine judgment demands humility in judging, showing mercy as we hope to receive it."<sup>61</sup> Importantly, though, this must occur without disbanding justice. According to O'Donovan we are "flesh and blood and full of infirmities, and society cannot endure if we judge with the rigor that an angel might use."<sup>62</sup> However, also importantly: "But that is not a reason to abandon justice, for justice must shake hands with mercy (cf. Ps. 85.10)"<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "The nearness of divine judgment demands humility in judging, showing mercy as we hope to receive it." Oliver O'Donovan, *Ways of Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 98.

<sup>59</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 250.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> O'Donovan, *Ways of Judgment*, 98.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

According to O'Donovan, justice and mercy meet on at least two levels. First, they meet in the self-knowing witness of the church. As O'Donovan writes: "the wisest of those who have thought about what might be implied in an evangelical politics have looked first to the social life of the church. There we may expect to see the Paschal victory take effect in judgments that immediately serve the creation of mutual love and the forgiveness of enemies."<sup>64</sup> Second, justice and mercy have a secondary meeting in temporal politics based on the first. This is due to the responsiveness of temporal political judgment to the merciful judgment that emanates from the knowledge of the Gospel as witnessed by the church. However, this responsiveness is indirect as it is responsiveness to the primary witness of the church. That is, temporal politics "are shaped by the presence of a society in which redemption is taking effect and assuming a social form; so they witness to the Paschal judgment, but indirectly."<sup>65</sup> Having said this, O'Donovan is careful also to state that, nonetheless:

There is only one society which is incorporated into the Kingdom of God and which recapitulates the narrative of the Christ-event, and that is the church. Even in deep Christendom civil society was not identical with the church, but, at most, merged with it on the surface in a prosopic union. Society shaped by the presence of the church forms a kind of penumbra to the church, a radiation of it rather than a participation in it.<sup>66</sup>

This entails a transformation of temporal politics through the leavening influence of the society of the Gospel, the church. Temporal politics are reactive and reactive even to the degree that they may and rightly should bow their knees and knowingly confess Jesus Christ as Lord and the limit of their own reign.<sup>67</sup> However, as mentioned, O'Donovan discerns an important difference between the church and temporal politics insofar as, while one will be incorporated into the kingdom, the other will not. Temporal politics can therefore become "a penumbra" to the kingdom and the church, but not a form of participation in it. This still leaves us with the question of the degree to which gradualist political theology shapes temporal politics. The notion of penumbra might imply very extensive shaping while the emphasis upon love as mercy might circumscribe it somewhat. Let us examine Gregory's

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 251.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 195.

thought before we further evaluate the possible implications of gradualist political theologies.

Gregory, in his *Politics and the Order of Love*, is focused especially on the question of love's role in politics and applies the abovementioned notion of the hypostatic union of love and justice to that problem. According to Gregory, love has a vocation in politics that has its root in a love for God, within which the neighbour is loved. That is, a Christian love of neighbours in God is what makes the constructive enterprise of politics possible for Christians.<sup>68</sup> But how, exactly, according to Gregory, should this love of neighbours in God be translated into common political structures in which the language of justice reigns? Here again Gregory makes an interesting move, drawing an analogy between the problem of reconciling the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ with the need to hold together God's love and God's justice: "Learning how to say both claims at the same time without denying the other—God is just and God is love—God is human and God is divine—is part of what Christian theology is all about."<sup>69</sup>

In this way Gregory hopes to speak of the aforementioned "hypostatic union,"<sup>70</sup> of love and justice wherein both witness to Christ, with love being "the condition for the possibility of justice."<sup>71</sup> How are justice and love then different? As one reads Gregory's book it becomes clear that he believes that they are not different. To Gregory, justice is simply love in a certain mode. *Justice is love in public*. This is confirmed when Gregory logically prioritizes the "hypostatic union" by saying that "love could be seen as the condition for the possibility of justice."<sup>72</sup> He maintains furthermore that justice is, in fact, love correcting itself in order to be more loving "by not overwhelming its object."<sup>73</sup> But if the church's love translates into temporal justice does that not imply that temporal authorities will, eventually, become like the church? Gregory maintains that this is not the case and claims a position that avoids both such theocracy as well as status quo defeatism.<sup>74</sup> He intends his position to go

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<sup>68</sup> Gregory, *Politics and the Order of Love*, 42.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>74</sup> Gregory writes: "I have tried to claim a space for a more dynamic Augustinian liberalism that avoids theocracy and status quo defeatism." See *ibid.*, 364.



neither the way of hostility between love and justice found in radical theological thought nor the way of peaceful, static border control between love and justice of which realist theologians are sometimes accused. Without further analysis of the concept of justice it is, however, unlikely that Gregory can accomplish his goal.

#### ***iv. Responding to the Gradualist Theologies***

These short summaries of the three schools of modern political theology describe them in a way that allows them to criticize one another. But the gradualist theologies are more difficult to criticize in this mode. Today, gradualist theologies seem to be gaining headway and have faced little in the way of comprehensive critique. A more comprehensive evaluation of all three political theologies will follow in the thesis. For now, a short note on the general project of gradualist theologies will suffice to compensate for the lack of comprehensive contemporary responses.

If the relationship between love and justice, or church and political structures, is what the gradualist theologians will have us believe, it begets a simple question: Are democratic citizens then not supposed to shape the democratic state laws, regulations and structures according to what they love? It is arguable that O'Donovan, and certain that Gregory, must be understood to answer this question positively. The question that then quickly arises is that of the effect this has on the relationship of the modern Christian to the state. If our loves are determined to a great extent by the love we learn of in the Gospel, does a gradualist framework not allow us to foster a theocratic impulse? Does the Christian not want to shape the state into the complete image of the good, the true and the beautiful he comes to know in the Gospel of Christ?

Gregory displays a more perfectionist optimism in this regard than O'Donovan does, which entails that “the theocratic charge” is more directly applicable to him. Gregory defends himself against such a charge and argues that the consciousness of the existence of sin in the world tempers how much love one spills into the public realm. This consciousness of sin does the work of determining that we cannot “aim too high”<sup>75</sup> as we seek to mould the state to our concept of the good. Thereby, Gregory clearly states that his framework does not set it as the state's *telos*

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 367.

to become like the church. He clearly claims that his vision is not theocratic. But if that is the case, then the citizen who wants to lead his life in the context of modern Western democracies has little sense of how to go about it. What do Gregory's suggestions mean for the Christian's daily reality as a citizen interacting with the state? In other words: What does any distinction between love and political justice with increased emphasis on love in politics concretely mean? It might be suggested that gradualist theologians risk keeping the relationship and boundaries between love and the justice of political structures unclear, thereby sending Christians on an equally unclear mission which could land anywhere between a quietist retreat and a theocratic vision. This consequence would follow from a lack of criteria of engagement. It all sounds very good when Gregory describes the civil rights movement in America as having been an event in which love became justice (that is, love translated into concrete legislation) in order to illustrate that there is and must be a dynamic between love and temporal politics.<sup>76</sup> But is this what truly happened in the civil rights movement? And if it is, where does love stop and by what criteria?

#### ***v. The Debate: An Outline of the Issues and Problems***

We have surveyed three types of understandings of the relationship between love and justice in political structures. We discovered that the three understandings are built on problematic or incomplete understandings of the relationship between love and justice in political structures. The approach of the realist theologians cannot properly account for Christian engagement and influence on political government but instead risks creating a neat, peaceful, boundary between love and justice in temporal politics whereby each is, to a large extent, unaffected by the other. Although the realist understanding gives us an account of a temporal justice, it seems by nature simply that of a justice compromised. This is made more problematic by the cryptic role love plays with regards to political government in realist political theology, rendering the criteria for temporal justice unclear and without a clear vocation for love and thereby feeding directly into the critique later posed by the radical political theologies.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 192–193.

The approach taken by radical political theologies also has its flaws. Instead of a peaceful boundary, they present a relationship between love and justice in political structures that easily slides into negative tension and animosity. There is no recognition of a special temporal sphere of justice. Rather, the ethical demand of the Gospel is the same in every sphere and every context. In the radical political theologies this is further exacerbated by the very strict ways in which they picture how love can find expression, radical non-violence being the pre-eminent trait. As a result they risk ending up in an unhappy binary which tends either to theocracy or a ghettoizing of the church.

The gradualist political theologies try to escape these alternatives of quietism and hostility towards temporal political structures. To do this they attempt to posit a dynamic between church and political structures. Love becomes justice—the justice of the state gradually takes on the shape of Christian love. But this approach provides no criteria for engagement. When does love cease becoming justice? Does the transformation of political institutions stop before they become like the church? Before they effectively become a pseudo-church? The result of gradualist political theology is that political judgment and action becomes more difficult than it has to be, and without sufficient criteria to guide them.

## ***vi. Where We Must Now Head***

We have now given a description of our conversation partners that both prepares us for our coming interactions with them throughout the thesis and also helps us better understand the thesis's own context and importance. After our survey of our interlocutors we can see more clearly what is needed. What is needed is a theological approach that rightly analyses the relationship between love and justice and, in turn, the relationship between love and temporal political structures. Furthermore, what should be sought are guiding criteria that can successfully guide acts of Christian political action and judgment.

In order to do this we will later investigate the concept of *Love* (Chapter 3). After that we will seek to understand the *Relationship of Love to Justice* (Chapter 4). But especially, we will be investigating the relationship between *Love and Justice in Reference to Political Structures* (Chapter 5). Finally, to complete our picture we

will be looking to find *Criteria of Interaction* concerning love and justice (Chapter 6).

Yet to be properly able to do this we have to start at the beginning, by asking first how to inquire theologically into ethics and politics. This will allow the project to unfold naturally and provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the theological limitations and possibilities of other schools of political theology. Thus, the question of how to inquire theologically into ethics and politics will be the subject of the next chapter (Chapter 2). We must do this if we are to confidently address our central concerns, because we must first understand the terms on we will be thinking, as these terms will determine every moment in the subsequent argument. This is the first building block in saying something theologically concerning politics. In this next chapter we will learn what can and cannot be used as resources for thinking theologically about our subject matter. We will begin with a constructive argument concerning theological thought, moving from broad brush strokes toward ever-greater concretizations. At the end of the chapter we will, as in every subsequent chapter, engage our conversation partners on the issue of theology and human thought, thereby providing a more definite account of the thesis's contentions as well as what they entail. At this point we will, therefore, begin by inquiring into theology and human thought before inquiring into the theology of love and justice.

## Chapter 2

### Theology in Ethics and Politics

The main concern of this chapter is to understand the ground rules for theological rationality as it engages in ethics and political theology. The most basic objective here is to understand what can be brought into the process of theological thought concerning matters ethical and political. A range of understandings concerning this basic element of theological thinking have, traditionally, been categorized into two camps: natural theologies and theologies of revelation. This is found extended into ethics and politics in the form of what can be called “revealed ethics” and “natural ethics.” By the end of this chapter it will have become clear where, within that conceptual constellation, the argument of the present thesis is broadly to be located. In the following section, in the interaction with the thesis’s conversation partners, that broad placement will be better detailed and concretized. The present chapter will contend that a natural theology/ethics that would hope to bring natural, empirical realities into the *theological* thought procedure cannot be sustained without serious qualifications. This is not to say that speculation upon natural empirical realities cannot enter into any type of interaction with the theological thought procedure. However, the status of such speculation has to be delineated and circumscribed to the greatest extent, as will be better explained later.

#### A. The De-centring and Re-ordering Event

Investigating the effects of the event of the Gospel on human thought raises the question concerning the extent, impact and radicality of that event in relation to the thinking subject confronted with it. This means that we want to understand the extent to which, when assented to, the revelation of God in Christ, as confirmed in the resurrection of Christ, *demands a complete reordering of human thought with respect to that event*. The answer will have momentous consequences for subsequent

theological thinking concerning ethics and politics as it will determine what can and cannot be brought into the processes of theological thinking.

It might seem that any idea of a “complete reordering of human thought” must come through a point of certainty around which every other thought must be ordered. A solid instinct guides that presupposition. Yet, when thinking theologically we must take care to avoid problematic understandings of certainty that assume that certainty must be achieved by the human subject operating its own independent processes based on “a point within.”

We must, therefore, begin by shaking off understandings of certainty which do not hold in light of the Gospel event. One must begin by saying that the human subject presented with the Scripture’s proclamation of the cross and resurrection of Christ is put into an inverse relation to Scripture which threatens humankind’s own pretensions to certainty and knowledge. Humanity no longer can sit and judge the Scripture. In the Scripture’s Gospel-proclamation, it is humankind that is under judgment. It is humankind’s judgment that is played out on the cross of Christ and in his resurrection. Humankind is therefore thrust into a great crisis by the proclamation of the Scripture, one which does not occur when, for example, reading the daily newspaper. Humankind, not God, is placed in severe doubt by the cross of Christ, in the judgment which belonged to humanity. Bent Flemming Nielsen puts it well when he writes: “Der Mensch selbst, als erkennendes, deutendes, auslegendes Subjekt, wird—von der eigenen inneren ‚Sache‘ des Textes—in eine “Krisis” gestellt . . . die menschliche ‚Erkenntnis‘ selbst unter eine ‚Krisis‘ gestellt wird, bei der alle autonomen Prinzipien des Erkennens und der Vernunft von der ‚Sache‘ des Texts selbst in Frage gestellt.”<sup>77</sup>

Yet the greatest moment, the moment which makes the understanding of this great judgment possible, which reverses human subjectivity, is the *de-centring* of the subject confronted with the proclamation of Scripture. Humankind is summoned and allowed to identify itself with the man that is forgiven, the man without sin, the man who is revealed in the resurrected Christ. Humanity’s true identity is with the risen

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<sup>77</sup>My translation: “The human being itself, as a knowing, interpreting and expositing subject, is put into a crisis by the inner logic of the text . . . human knowledge itself is put into a crisis whereby all the autonomous principles of knowledge and rationality are put in question by the inner logic of the text itself.” Bent Flemming Nielsen, *Die Rationalität Der Offenbarungstheologie: die Struktur des Theologieverständnisses von Karl Barth* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1988), 16.

Christ! The Christian subject is only rightly known in this proclaimed event. This is the result of the acceptance of the proclamation itself. The Christian subject, in faith, identifies itself with the subject of faith proclaimed. Therefore, the Christian proclamation entails a complete re-ordering of human thought when assented to. It is not a re-ordering around a Cartesian point *within*, but around a point *outside* the thinking subject.<sup>78</sup> Certainty received in the position of faith initiates a re-ordering of human thought. The human subject, its knowledge of itself, is placed outside itself with the true man of the proclamation, Jesus Christ. The certainty received in the position of faith can have little to do with humankind's pretence to self-acquired certainty. It plays out as a Copernican revolution of human subjectivity. To put it in dryer, less poetic language: Human subjectivity is decentred by the Christian proclamation entailing that human subjectivity must be re-centred around the centre of the proclamation. The results must be that the theological thought process is a thought process based on the proclamation and not on material accessed prior to or alongside that proclamation. This however creates its own crisis for human thought, a great tribulation in fact. Certainty in faith, unlike the Cartesian meditation which arrives at certainty through a method of doubt, makes the believer per se subject to doubt. This is the radicality of the event of the Gospel which entails a re-ordering of human thought with respect to itself.

As has been stated, humanity is thrust into a moment of great crisis by the proclamation of the Gospel. That this crisis is included and necessitated by the proclamation is nothing new. But for some reason theologians do not agree on the severity of the crisis. What has already been said about the Gospel should show the all-consuming nature of this crisis. It should show how the subjectivity of the person confronted by this proclamation, in order to receive it, has to be completely re-ordered around the event. This obviously means that the event is not only the great positive around which thinking must conform but a great critic of all the presuppositions of the thinking subject. It was systematic doubt which led Descartes

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<sup>78</sup> Karl Barth writes astutely on this point and its theological implications: "The procedure in theology, then, is to establish self-certainty on the certainty of God, to measure it by the certainty of God, and thus to begin with the certainty of God without waiting for the validating of this beginning by self-certainty." Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1:196. Hereafter, *CD*.

to certainty, but one could say that the certainty of faith in understanding leads the Christian subject to doubt.

Therefore, it can be said that every theology that does not let itself succumb to something analogous to a “Cartesian” method of doubt in relation to the Gospel of the resurrection of Christ is not letting the event form theology to the extent that it demands. Everything has to be doubted through the proclamation. One cannot even be confident enough to say that the Gospel includes God’s “Yes” to creation as it is empirically present to our senses in everyday experience and that creation therefore becomes an independent source of truths about human nature and human action. After the event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, creation can be said to be rightly known only through looking to the resurrected Jesus Christ. Creation has no independent reality apart from that.

Let us stop briefly to explain this notion of the resurrection of Christ as a creation event. This is an understanding whose importance will become clearer as the chapter continues. It is a thought that emphasizes that creation is rightly understood only by looking to God’s revelation of himself in Christ. It agrees with what Barth maintains: “I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s Son our Lord in order to perceive and to understand that God the Almighty, the Father, is the Creator of heaven and earth. If I did not believe the former, I could not perceive and understand the latter. If I perceive and understand the latter, my perception and understanding are completely established, sustained and impelled by me believing the former.”<sup>79</sup> This means that anything we say about creation *theologically* is made possible by the revelation which is itself fully understood only through the revelation of God in Christ, as Barth notes in discussing some past failures of theology that could have been avoided “if it had realized that it is primarily the creature and not the Creator of whom we are not certain, and that in order to be certain of him we need proof or revelation.”<sup>80</sup>

Saying all this entails that “a creation ethic” is properly possible only through the self-proving divine act of revelation whereby creation is properly identified as the new creation in Christ. This is important for the present work. Creation must be identified by looking through the new creation in Christ. The

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<sup>79</sup> Barth, *CD* III/1:30.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



difficult question is whether the new creation in Christ (known through proclamation) can be *theologically* correlated with “everyday empirical reality.” But that is a question to which we will turn later. For now, it will be enough to know that the resurrection of Christ, the Gospel, is a creation event in which the invisible ground and end of creation is constituted and made visible and available to rational reflection. More importantly, this highlights our earlier contention that the Gospel revelation is the starting point for theology and the only starting point for theology, which also means that it is a checkpoint through which no assumptions can be brought. Or better yet: a point against which each and every one of our theological assumptions needs to be tested again and again. Natural theology—a theology that attempts to gain theological insight by beginning with created, empirical reality—has become suspect, to say the least.

## **B. Thinking Theologically**

How does theology then proceed constructively? First, theological thinking has to be determined by the object of theology that makes the radical, re-ordering demand. Ultimately this object is the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. But theology does not have direct access to this object but only indirect through the witness and proclamation of it as it has revealed itself in Jesus Christ. This means that theology’s object is approached indirectly through its proclamation. In addressing itself to this proclamation which is found in the Scriptures, human thought engages in theology. Human thought confronts its object, the proclamation, and derives concepts from it. Often the concepts will bring with them what appear to be contradictions. Then theology has to think through the seeming contradictions introduced by these concepts of thought and seek, by thought, to transcend the tensions created by the concepts themselves. This is what we will attempt to do in our discussions of political theology, for example in our treatment of love and justice as mitigated by the concepts of promise and judgment. But what is our approach in doing this? How do we allow ourselves to bring into the thesis certain concepts from the Scriptures and not others? The most straightforward answer we can give to this, risking banality, is: by reading the Scriptures. This means that one must immerse oneself in the thought-world of the Scriptures and then proceed to speak about it. But

this answer can be qualified even more. One is helped by reading the Scriptures with the background of other readings, past and present—the tradition of reading. One’s reading is, furthermore, also helped by research in historical–critical scholarship and other fields of biblical study. But neither human traditions nor historical–critical scholarship can take control of the reading as the Bible must be free and not captive in its speaking to us. So it is that “simply reading” the Scriptures must be the primary practice with the tradition of reading as well as more technical biblical scholarship being secondary.

Now in saying this we must be honest and admit that, although it is pure exegesis that we want, there will always be an element of both “reading in” and “reading out of” the text. But it is likewise certain that neither any tradition of reading, nor any historical–critical scholarship will ensure us against the ever-lurking threat that we read into the text. It is obvious that succumbing to traditions alone is a form of willing captivity to certain static points in the text in what is an ever-flowing conversation. And although historical–critical scholars might sometimes be made uneasy by the exegetical expansion or abbreviation of certain biblical texts, we must agree with Barth: “It is precisely a strict faithfulness which compels us to expand or to abbreviate the text, lest a too rigid attitude to the words should obscure that which is struggling to expression in them and which demands expression.”<sup>81</sup>

Anselm of Canterbury’s naming of God as “that above which nothing greater can be conceived” can, in this way, be said to be highly scriptural, following the deep logic of the Scriptures, even though the formulation itself is nowhere to be found there. Furthermore, Anselm’s subsequent theological procedure is one we find ourselves looking to as it cogently describes what we mean when we claim that theology must think through tensions brought about by its concepts. Anselm engaged with the Scriptures, emerged with his concept of “that above which nothing greater can be conceived,” found its negation/opposition (i.e., its non-existence) within his mind, but found that its negation was impossible. The negation or opposition tested and fortified the Scriptural concept. It was not simply that the affirmation was unaffected by its opposition, but that it was strengthened by it. By presenting the affirmation from the Scriptures with its opposition the strength of the affirmation was

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<sup>81</sup> Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 19.

tested and proven. Examples of this type of thinking will be found in some of the conceptual thinking concerning political theology later in the thesis.<sup>82</sup>

Here we must keep in mind that some readings are more commonplace than others and it is certain that all readings can be disputed. But we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of testing every concept used in the current thesis. We can, however, make a point of not using concepts which are too obviously debatable. We will instead focus on concepts and inferences which are such that the burden of proof is more obviously on those who would want to dispute them. As Barth writes: “That the assumptions are certainly justified is at the end only a relative certainty. They cannot be proven. In this uncertainty my fundamental assumption is, of course, included. For the present, however, I assume that in the Epistle to the Romans Paul did speak of Jesus Christ, and not of someone else.”<sup>83</sup> This might of course, seem like a trivialization of a very complicated debate which turns on hermeneutics and a host of other topics. It is however meant not to be a trivialization but rather a reminder that we should keep our focus and follow the central thrust of our investigation.

### **C. Inferences and Interaction with Conversation Partners**

But let us get back to the main line of reasoning we have followed in the current chapter. Let us recall that human subjectivity is decentred by the Christian proclamation, entailing that human subjectivity must be re-centred on the proclamation. This entails that the theological thought procedure is based on the proclamation and not upon material accessed prior to or alongside the proclamation. Proceeding from this understanding, human thought confronts its object, the proclamation, and derives concepts from it. Then theology has to think through the seeming contradictions introduced by these concepts of thought and seek, by thought, to transcend the tensions created by the concepts themselves. In all of this theology will be operating only with the relative certainty that theologians will be reading out

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<sup>82</sup> Our influence is, it is true, Anselm of Canterbury. But we come to Anselm by way of Karl Barth. Furthermore, the reading presented here has been highly influenced by an article by Sigurd Baark as well as discussions with its author concerning the theological method. See Sigurd Baark, “Anselm: Platonism, Language and Truth in Proslogion,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 63, no. 4 (2010): 379–397.

<sup>83</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 10.

more than they will be reading into the text. This is the dry outline of what we have established.

Having described the theological method in this way lays the groundwork for the investigation that follows. It also advances an argument pertaining to how the work of theology, particularly political theology, ought to proceed. Importantly, in light of this positive description of the theological thought process, other approaches must be judged incomplete or untenable. As a result, what is conventionally known as natural theology must fall under suspicion. Natural theology, which seeks to have theological reasoning determined by natural reality or “perceivable facts” of empirical reality, cannot be sustained without serious qualifications. This also holds true for theological ethics. There is no room left for any kind of natural theology which would want to correlate speculation upon natural actualities with theological thinking so as to create a theological ethic determined by non-theological realities. The radical claim of the Gospel-message over and against human subjectivity has been established with that effect. It will influence all subsequent thinking concerning the concepts of love and justice and their relations to political structures.

However, this impossibility of natural theology for theological ethics should be explained a bit further. If human thought is constituted in the event of resurrection, then thinking based on the event is not determined by considerations external to itself. Everything needs to be accessed in light of the event itself. Much theology in the present, but still more so in the past, has tended to bring assumptions alien to the Gospel into the discussion and to see the Gospel as a consummation or an add-on to what was already an intelligible reality—creation. In this way, some Christian thinkers began to feel comfortable taking up Aristotelian considerations into their theological method of thought. They could claim through observation, for example, that human beings are by nature social animals and thereby also political animals. They could then, as a result, use this to infer that before the fall of Adam there was a political order and that, having a pre-lapsarian origin, political authority should be considered good. This is a helpful example that portrays a confusion of theological with natural speculation. This was a break with the Augustinian tradition which would not identify politics as originally good based on such reasoning.<sup>84</sup> True

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<sup>84</sup> Robert A. Markus, “Two Conceptions of Political Authority. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XIX. 14–

to the Christ-event, Augustine saw that true justice was only with and in Christ and that therefore “true justice has no existence *save* in that republic *whose founder and ruler is Christ*.”<sup>85</sup> But with the aforementioned Christian Aristotelians, a pre-theological determination of humankind entered the theological thought procedure and kept human thought from being fully shaped by the event which concerns theology. Such theological thought has, historically, been called “natural theology” insofar as “nature” acts as a source for theological reasoning. We have already parted ways with such theological traditions. Natural theology is off the table in its most typical forms.

We should nevertheless try to be a bit more specific about what we mean when we use concepts such as *natural theology* and *revealed theology*. It has been said that natural theology threatens to bring non-theological reasoning into the theological thought procedure. Revealed theology, on the other hand, is the antithesis to natural theology in that it can be charged with irrationalism, making natural realities incomprehensible. The implicit danger, someone could say, is that in any determination based solely on revelation the human will imposes order on life, both individual and social, instead of recognizing the order which is *already there* in nature.<sup>86</sup> But this short sketch is rather incomplete. So, let us inquire further into the meaning of the concepts of “a revealed ethic” and “a natural ethic.” Here we want highlight two elements which are, however, deeply interrelated. One of those elements is more distinctively epistemological, the other considers ethical implications.

First, there is an *epistemological element* which relates to the relationship between faith and natural reason. The question is whether there is any theological knowledge beyond, outside of or prior to the proclamation of God’s revelation. In this aspect a theology of revelation is associated with a faith which has its ground solely in the revelation. Natural theology, on the other hand, would then understand faith to have sources of theological knowledge beyond, outside of or prior to knowledge of proclamation. Revealed theology in the epistemological aspect can, as

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15, and “Some Thirteenth-Century Interpretations,” in *The City of God: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothy F. Donnelly (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 107–109.

<sup>85</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, [1887] 2007), 2.21.

<sup>86</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and the Moral Order*, 16.

was said before, be charged with irrationalism and a disjunction between natural realities and theological knowledge. On the other hand, natural theology, regarding its epistemological aspect, could be accused of making faith in the revelation into a mere add-on to “natural knowledge of God.”

Second, and following from this, there is the ethical implication of revealed theology and natural theology in *regard to external realities*. Regarding this aspect the concern is how the human being acts with regard to empirical and material realities. Revealed theology, regarding this aspect, means that human beings could possibly act on empirical reality with no regard for “the way things are.” Natural theology, on the other hand, sees how things are, the natural order of things, as legislative of human actions. The revealed ethic can be accused of seeing no order “out there” while the natural ethic could be charged with being too constrained by the natural orders it pretends to see. The revealed ethic can be said to tend to impose order while the natural ethic recognizes and acts in accordance with a pre-established order.

This opposition of approaches has tempted many to take a stand with one thesis against the other, while yet other thinkers have wanted to have the best of both worlds and reach some kind of synthesis. Our primary conversation partners have addressed these issues in varying degrees but each one of them can be mined to find where they fall with respect to these very basic issues of theology: revealed theology and natural theology in light of their abovementioned epistemic and ethical aspects.

### ***i. Being Mindful of the Anthropological Trap***

As one looks to the work of Stanley Hauerwas one is struck by how idiosyncratic, yet strangely compelling, his view is of the relationship between revelation, theology and ethics. At first glance it might seem that Hauerwas’s frequent use of the concept of revelation and appreciation of Karl Barth suggests that he places a strong emphasis on revelation as the basis for Christian knowledge. This might be taken to imply that, concerning the epistemological aspect of the revealed theology/natural theology divide, Hauerwas would exhibit a decidedly strong emphasis on revelation. But there remains an issue that changes that initial assumption, which is *how* Hauerwas believes the revelation is mediated. Hauerwas maintains that human

witness, through church practices, is the way in which the revelation is mediated, explained and propagated.<sup>87</sup> In this vein Hauerwas claims that “Christian identity is not primarily to be found in statements or debates or arguments, but in particular practices, commitments and habits.” The Gospel story “is not merely told but embodied in a people’s habits that form and are formed in worship, governance and morality. Therefore, the existence of Israel and the church is not accidentally related to the story but is *necessary for our knowledge of God*” [italics mine].<sup>88</sup> This is not, of course, a one-sided emphasis in virtue of which *orthopraxis* rules alone without *orthopistis* entering the picture. But importantly, church practices seem to hold a position that is primary or equal to the Scripture proclamation within Hauerwas’s theology. This can be seen in Hauerwas’s insistence that the Scriptures are given their importance by the concrete, practicing community. Writing on the issue of tradition and Scripture, for example, Hauerwas claims: “Of course, Scripture stands over the community exerting a critical function but that it does so is an aspect of the community’s self-understanding.”<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, Hauerwas has reminded his readers of how there was once a Christian community before it had written and collected its texts.<sup>90</sup> By such statements, and combined with the highly charged rhetoric concerning the centrality of the church, Hauerwas could be regarded as giving logical, epistemological priority to the community of believers.

Hauerwas indeed prefers looking towards the practices of the community as a source for doing theology. In fact, in the large companion to Christian ethics that Hauerwas has edited, several aspects of the church liturgy are used as the primary ground for theologizing. It therefore seems that, within the Hauerwasian scheme of things, God is known through the practices of a human community. This may well awaken the question as to whether this entails the possibility of engaging in the

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<sup>87</sup> Hauerwas writes: “The witness of Christians may or may not take the form of argument at different times and places, but if the Holy Spirit does not witness to the Father and Son through the witness of Christians, then Christians have no argument to make. Christian argument rests on witness, and both argument and witness are the work of the Spirit.” See Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2002), 210. Hauerwas also writes that “theology is primarily about the Church. This means that theological ethics is a discipline that reflects on the practices of the Church.” See Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells, “Why Christian Ethics Was Invented,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 37.

<sup>88</sup> See Hauerwas, “The Servant Community,” 373.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Hauerwas and Wells, “Why Christian Ethics Was Invented,” 41.

anthropology of the church, consisting of investigations of empirical actualities, and calling it theology. It would certainly seem too harsh to describe Hauerwas's method in this way without serious qualification. But the question encapsulates a certain uneasiness we might acknowledge regarding Hauerwas's theological method. There can most certainly be a place for human witness in a theology of revelation. But the question is what exactly we mean by human witness and Hauerwas's treatment of it, at times, gives pause. When Hauerwas ventures to write, for example, that "theology is primarily about the Church," and that "this means that theological ethics is a discipline that reflects on the practices of the Church,"<sup>91</sup> we cannot follow him. We should avoid using empirical actualities as the basis of theological affirmations. Hauerwas's epistemic use of the empirical manifestations of the church might be in danger of doing just that.

As we look to the natural/revealed theology divide as it regards *external realities*, a very similar problematic plays out in Hauerwas's writings. First, Hauerwas does understand there to be such a thing as creation and that it is woven into the perceived natural order. As Hauerwas writes: "I certainly would not deny the natural order as a manifestation of God's kingdom."<sup>92</sup> But he also claims that "The issue is not creation, but the kind of creation Jews and Christians continue to affirm as integral to God's being." That is to say, not everything perceived as part of the natural order is self-legitimizing as God's good creation. Already this underscores the importance of adopting a judicious approach with regard to external realities in determining the extent to which they are to be seen as "integral to God's being." And if they are not deemed "integral" in this way, there is considerable license to act towards the external realities so as to transform them, an attitude we have associated with the revealed ethic. Yet, where does Hauerwas find a measuring stick with which to engage in judicious reasoning of this kind? It should come as little surprise that Hauerwas points us in the direction of the church, as it is there that we find the "new unity of creation in Christ Jesus . . . most nearly embodied."<sup>93</sup> So we can, and ought to, engage with external realities based on the attempt to correlate them with the new

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>92</sup> Hauerwas, "Why the 'Sectarian Temptation' Is a Misrepresentation," 108.

<sup>93</sup> Hauerwas writes of "the new unity of creation in Christ Jesus which we believe is most nearly embodied in the church." See *ibid.*, 109.



unity of creation in Christ, and Hauerwas believes this is possible by holding the church in view. Here it is, again, the centrality of the church which causes us unease. It makes the possibility of the correlation between empirical actualities seem too straightforward and gives the church an uncomfortable status in this regard. If one were to follow Hauerwas one would have to be very careful that one's ecclesiology does not overshadow one's Christology and that empirical actualities of the church do not overtake one's theology. The clear danger, to speak in hyperbole, is that our theology might begin to look like the anthropology of the church.

## ***ii. Avoiding Over-Confident Correlations***

A very different set of possibilities and problems emerge with the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr does not make much use of the concepts of revealed and natural theology. Nonetheless, his attitude to the issues at stake can be adequately discerned from his writings. As one looks to Niebuhr's theological method it might, at first, seem rather difficult to capture. Furthermore, once grasped, his method might appear somewhat unprincipled. But there is a definite method and this initial sense of unclarity is easily explained by what Niebuhr hopes to accomplish with his method.

Niebuhr has a binary loyalty to both revelation and human experience. As a champion of revelation, he criticizes the modern scientific mindset which pretends that it can approach its subjects without any kind of framework for meaning to make sense of empirical data. It is, according to Niebuhr, a great pretension. In fact, the presuppositions of scientists, time after time, determine the conclusions arrived at by the "empirical" method. Furthermore, such a mindset blinds the scientist by its bare reductionism. Niebuhr makes an example of the Christian insistence on humankind's egocentricity. Niebuhr writes: "academic 'empiricism' insists that the Christian conviction rests upon a dogmatic assumption, rather than upon evidence. It, therefore, proceeds to uncover evidence that particular forms of egocentricity are the consequence of particular causes. This is indeed a fact. But preoccupation with this fact tempts a scientific culture to obscure the more general human phenomenon which underlies the particular social and psychic causes. . . . Thus an elaborate scientific enterprise may result in a totally unjustified nominalism, unable to

apprehend general and universal characteristics under an obviously unique phenomenon.”<sup>94</sup>

Niebuhr’s point is that some kind of framework is needed to read empirical data and, to the theologian, the Christian revelation provides a framework for meaning. Nevertheless, although the abovementioned quotes might make it sound differently, Niebuhr does not oppose the empirical, scientific mentality. He is a firm believer in the importance of human experience as a necessary corrective for our ideas and ideologies: “Any careful observation of any structure of reality, of sequences and causes, even if its frame of reference is inadequate, will yield some truth.”<sup>95</sup> Niebuhr can therefore be said to have a twofold concern, one with the revelatory framework of interpretation and another with human experiences. This reveals much about Niebuhr’s theological method. Niebuhr’s own words capture this perfectly as he writes, concerning his own theological method, that it seeks a “circular relation between faith and experience.”<sup>96</sup> This indicates an understanding of theology which seeks an ever-re-occurring correlation between the truths of faith and the truths of human experience. It is this clearly phrased attitude that can create the impression that Niebuhr’s method is somehow lax or unprincipled. As Robert Song points out: “Because of this correlation, it was possible for Niebuhr to reach conclusions argued either from a consideration of the facts or from the premises of theology.”<sup>97</sup>

This is further exacerbated by Niebuhr’s uncomfortable, but repeated, reference to the truths of the Christian faith as “myths.” There is a good defence to be made for his use of the concept “myth” in that it is employed to counter literalist and superficial readings of the revelation. According to Niebuhr, “it is the genius of true myth to suggest the dimension of depth in reality and to point to a realm of essence which transcends the surface of history.” But Niebuhr’s method, coupled with his understanding of the “myths” of Christianity as portraying “the dimension of depth in reality” creates its own problems. As Robert Song argues, “the potential danger of founding it on an understanding of religion as the dimension of depth in human

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<sup>94</sup> Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems*, 8.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>96</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, “Intellectual autobiography,” in *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Political and Social Thought*, ed. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: Macmillan, 1961), 9.

<sup>97</sup> Robert Song, *Christianity and Liberal Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 52.

existence is that the symbols may gain existential or experiential purchase at the expense of referential content: The content may become subordinated to, e.g., social or political requirements, which may themselves be interpreted in a way that is insufficiently rooted theologically.”<sup>98</sup>

One might not, however, even have to go all the way to Niebuhr’s use of the language of myths to find problems with his method. This is because Niebuhr’s desire to maintain the circular relation of faith and human experience and call this a theological method still fails to make accurate distinctions. As will be argued later, empirical, experiential data is included in the ethical decision-making of the ethical agent. But these empirical, experiential actualities are not an aspect of the first tier of that procedure, the meta-analysis that takes place before concrete ethical decision and engagement. A more extensive treatment of what this concretely means will follow in the coming chapter on love. For now, it suffices to say that Niebuhr threatens to bring extra theological material into the theological thought process with his too-facile correlation of faith and experience. This again reminds us of the aforementioned Christian Aristotelians, who felt much too comfortable drawing theological truths from anthropological considerations. Much of what Niebuhr writes is compelling. But building on what this thesis has already established, Niebuhr’s attempt at a synthesis must be said to have too little hesitation and circumscription when it comes to meshing theology and natural speculation together and reaching “conclusions argued either from a consideration of the facts or from the premises of theology,”<sup>99</sup> thus creating the illusion that they follow from the Gospel revelation in equal measure.

As regards the second *external aspect* of the revealed/natural theology divide, one could say that Niebuhr attempts a similar type of bridge-building. While it is true, according to Niebuhr, that humankind acts in accordance with natural reality, it is not determined by it to the fullest and the good life cannot be characterized simply by adherence to the perceived natural order: “The real situation is that man transcends his own reason, which is to say that he is not bound in his actions by reason’s coherences and systems. His freedom consists in a capacity for

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 52.

self-transcendence in infinite regression.”<sup>100</sup> So it is that natural reality and humankind’s perception of it should determine humankind’s action within it, but a possibility always remains for humankind to rethink the situation in terms of a transcendent, theological, possibility. As a result, there is always a slight possibility that the mechanisms of seeming natural necessities could be broken up. Once the will is given an equal or prior place to natural reason, humanity can will against perceived social and natural structures.

The question arises here as to which holds logical priority for Niebuhr, humankind’s perception of the world, nature and its rational structures or his transcendent freedom to act in disjunction to those structures? In the end, no direct answer is given and one might even say that Niebuhr would have liked to see himself as falling on neither side of that dispute. It has already been said that there is always a slight possibility for transcendent freedom to be exercised but one of the less clear aspects of Niebuhr’s thought is the extent to which this is the case. While we must appreciate Niebuhr’s hope for a synthesis, the latter could never become a proper synthesis as it simply seeks to unite two elements to create something like a halfway house between what we have called revealed theology and natural theology. It is more of a balancing act than a synthesis.

### ***iii. Emphasizing the Speculative Nature of Correlation***

Oliver O’Donovan’s approach differs somewhat from those of other thinkers. Like Niebuhr, he regrets the polarization of revealed ethic and natural ethic and wants to bring the opposing sides together. He advises against the polarization of an ethic without ontological grounding and an ethic based on creation and so naturally known.<sup>101</sup> But rather than simply stating this he articulates the manner in which these must be taken together. Out of our conversation partners, as will be shown, O’Donovan is the one, according to our measures, with the most compelling treatment of these issues. As a result, the substance of our discussion concerning the issue of revealed and natural theology will focus on O’Donovan’s writings. It will therefore be by moving through O’Donovan that we can best explain where the

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<sup>100</sup> Niebuhr, “Christian Faith and Natural Law,” 49–50.

<sup>101</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 20.

current thesis stands with regards to revealed and natural knowledge in their epistemological and ethical dimensions. Saying that we move “through” O’Donovan’s treatment suggests that we will be following and yet elaborating on the sketch he has already provided.

O’Donovan’s argument is of special interest here as it is upheld by an evangelical principle which is then used to re-introduce a place for theological thinking concerning itself with natural realities. O’Donovan’s argument, like that of the present thesis, is driven to focus on the resurrection of Christ as a special starting point for ethics because the resurrection “tells of the vindication of all creation.”<sup>102</sup> The Gospel of the resurrection of Christ, O’Donovan claims, pronounced not just a judgment over creation but also an affirmation *of* creation. In effect, there is a “Yes” spoken to creation. Thereby, O’Donovan argues, “the work of the Creator who made Adam, who brought into being an order of things in which humanity has a place, is affirmed once and for all by this conclusion.”<sup>103</sup> Without the resurrection event, which acts as an affirmation of the perceived order of creation, there would, in O’Donovan’s opinion, be left only a world-transcending ethic of abnegation.<sup>104</sup> This is why Christian ethics should begin with the resurrection. Otherwise an ethic which concerns itself with creation would be impossible: “God has given life on earth order and it should conform to the order given it.”<sup>105</sup>

Having established all this, the results are interesting. It follows, for O’Donovan, that there can be no debate between an ethic of creation and an ethic of resurrection. The polarization of the choices is ill-advised within O’Donovan’s framework because the resurrection event is “the reaffirmation of creation” insofar as “in the resurrection of Christ creation is restored and the kingdom of God dawns.”<sup>106</sup> Using the language of restoration, O’Donovan argues that one cannot talk about any restoration of creation or human nature without recognizing a certain prior human nature which is being restored.<sup>107</sup> O’Donovan therefore finds that he can boldly claim: “The order of things that God has made is there. It is objective, and

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 14–15.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 17–18.

humankind has a place within it. Christian ethics, therefore, has an objective reference because it is concerned with man's life in accordance with this order."<sup>108</sup> In this O'Donovan finds himself in agreement with Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics in that he can say that "the way the universe *is* determines how man *ought* to behave himself in it."<sup>109</sup> Based on this O'Donovan can maintain:

We are constantly presented with the unacceptably polarized choice between an ethic that is revealed and has no ontological grounding and an ethic that is based on creation and so is naturally known. This polarization deprives redemption and revelation of their proper theological meaning as the divine reaffirmation of created order. If, on the other hand, it is the gospel of the resurrection that assures us of the stability and permanence of the world which God has made, then neither of the polarized options is right. In the sphere of revelation, we will conclude, and only there, can we see the natural order as it really is and overcome the epistemological barriers to an ethic that conforms to nature. This nature includes all men, and indeed, as we shall see later, does not exclude a certain 'natural knowledge' which is also a part of man's created endowment. And yet only in Christ do we apprehend that order in which we stand and that knowledge of it with which we have been endowed."<sup>110</sup>

What makes O'Donovan's explanation rather tempting is the evangelical principle with which it begins and through which it seeks to establish other relations. We want however, to tread carefully, as to the status of subsequent theological thinking.

In other words, natural reality is not all nonsensical. There is a correspondence between creation as revealed in Christ and natural, empirical realities. O'Donovan is right to say that we can have faith that our perceived, empirical reality will have a degree of ultimate correspondence to that which is promised of creation in Christ. But the fullness of creation exists only in Christ and the extent to which "the creation out there," empirical reality, already partakes in this new life cannot be so easily correlated. Christ is the potentiality of creation but the degree to which this potentiality is actual in empirical reality is the greatest guessing game. Therefore, our contention is that we cannot correlate the two with any kind of certainty. We are therefore left to proceed very speculatively. It is inevitable that we will evaluate our external actualities and attempt to speculate on them with regard to the Gospel proclamation. But this exercise will be as uncertain as it is inevitable that

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 20.

we engage in it. So, as we must find ourselves agreeing with O'Donovan concerning the affirmation of natural realities by the revelation of God in Christ, we must firmly emphasize the speculative, uncertain nature of any thoughts that proceed from this. This highlights a difference that must always be accentuated between theology and speculative engagements with natural realities as well as the priorities of and difference between a revealed theology and natural theology and the great guessing game that can easily result when we try to correlate the two. After all, we want to be mindful that we are engaged in a theological thought process, which means that we are engaged in thought based on God's revelation in Christ.

Even so, it is clear that theology cannot pretend to explain everything. One day we will see clearly, face to face, but now we see only through a glass darkly (1.Cor 13.12). Philosopher Alain Badiou, who has written astutely on the Apostle Paul as a subject of truth, explains very clearly, in his philosophy, the nature of the events of truth and the situation that they construct. He points out that in all truth processes the subjects of truth are faced with the challenge of naming all reality in light of the truth. But the subject of truth has to admit that "the production of a truth process does not have the power to name all the elements of the situation."<sup>111</sup> This needs to be kept in mind, especially since theologians, unlike most thinkers, tend to think that they have to be able to explain everything at all times. It is important to remember that, whatever we want to say about natural realities and their supposed relationships (as we will and must), this will, in all likelihood, be ontology and not statements of theology. These must not be confused. To speak in hyperbole: There is ontology and then there is theology. God reveals himself to be radically different from all other reality, as has already been established. He does not exist on the same level as anything else. When one discusses the proclamation of God who has revealed himself one engages in theology. When one speaks of natural, empirical realities one is likely to be engaging in metaphysics and ontology.

Now, someone might want to object to what is being argued in this discussion. It could be claimed that it makes reality nonsensical if we take O'Donovan's lead while accentuating and inflating the difference between revealed and natural theology. Included in that objection is the worry that this could forego

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<sup>111</sup> Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2002), 85.

any way of transcending the opposition between revealed and natural ethics. Secondly, it could be charged that the type of theological thinking described in this chapter means that there can be no possible relationship between the theological thought process and our interactions with empirical, ontological actualities. It could be maintained, then, that such theological ethics contribute to a disregard of “the way things are.”

The worry that we will not be able to achieve a synthesis between revealed theology and natural theology is a legitimate worry. After all, no one wants to hold on to an irrationalist position or endanger the integrity of theology. O’Donovan’s hope of bringing the two positions together concerning these matters is to be admired and emulated. Moreover, we are united with him in understanding that the affirmation (revealed theology) must somehow be strengthened and fortified by its opposition (the challenge of natural theology). Here we are referring to O’Donovan’s thinking through of the evangelical principle which then includes its opposition of natural theology within itself. We are, broadly, united with O’Donovan in this attempt. But the question is *how* exactly we should want to understand it. It is true that we must include the antithesis on the revelation’s terms. This is to say, revealed theology/ethics is the affirmation which is tested by its opposition by natural theology/ethics. But the understanding that must ensue from our prior arguments is that the opposition is defeated and included within the affirmation of revealed theology, as there is nothing “irrationalist” about it. When tested, we have found that a notion of an independent, self-legislating reality of creation is not necessary to make the theological method concerning ethics and politics more rational. In fact, we found the truth of the matter to be the other way around. As we said above: “‘a creation ethic’ is properly possible only through the self-proving divine act of revelation whereby creation is properly identified as the new creation in Christ.” Natural theology, a creation ethic, is defeated but yet included in the strengthening of what was affirmed, revealed theology.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> The question could be asked why revealed theology is said to represent the “affirmation” more than natural theology. The reason is that, because of the way in which the theological procedure was described before as the thinking out of the proclamation of revelation, revealed theology must be seen to be the affirmation of the affirmation of revelation. It is the affirmation as its disposition is to allow the structures of the Gospel-proclamation to shape its theological thinking to the fullest. It therefore



Regarding the second objection, it is, in reality, twofold. First, it has to do with the question as to how ethical concepts emerge from a heavy emphasis on the revelation as the main determinant of theological thinking. Second, the question regards how, proceeding from that understanding, the ethical actor will interact with empirical, historical reality. That is, will he be indifferent towards empirical, natural realities or accommodating of “the way things are”?

So, how do ethical concepts emerge from a heavy emphasis on the Revelation? The answer is twofold in that there we can discern two tiers of ethical concepts (this will be explained more clearly and concretized in the coming chapter on love). First, there is a “meta-ethical” level of analysis that can be said to be integral to the theological enterprise. Within this meta-analysis a general framework and trajectories are discerned by whoever is interacting with the Scriptures. As with all theological work, such analysis is provisional and based on the scriptural proclamation. Its provisional nature means that it is never certain but always under doubt to the extent that it involves human thought and discernment standing under divine love and judgment. Such theological–ethical thinking can take many shapes but it typically entails a progression that looks, for example, something like this: A. Human love descends in its service, mirroring the proclamation of the love of God. B. Human love does not have divine freedom in its actions. C. Therefore, human love is an activity characterized by hope in God’s consummation.

A similar meta-analysis takes the following form: A. God has commanded certain acts in the Scriptures. B. God is free in every moment to speak anew. C. The commandments must be very important but cannot be said to be absolute or binding on God’s will. These two examples of basic thought processes are provisional and can be rethought and reshaped based on interaction with the Gospel-proclamation. The premises may be flawed and the inferences faulty. These examples illustrate form we are calling meta-ethical analysis

The second “tier” of ethical work involves a type of reasoning that adds and includes materials, concepts and thoughts that are not entirely scriptural but seem capable of being correlated with that which is discerned in the meta-analysis of theological ethics. It speculates not only on the revelation but also on empirical,

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must be understood to be the affirmation that meets its opposition or challenge in natural theology. By this we mean that it freely allows itself to be determined by the subject matter of theology.

ontological realities and seeks to correlate these two in the inevitable attempt to discern a correct action or rule of conduct. This second tier of ethical thinking can also take many shapes but a typical progression might run something like this: A. God seeks to restore people to communion with himself. B. Capital punishment takes away the possibility of turning toward God. C. This entails that capital punishment is always wrong. Consider another example of such reasoning: A. God has ordained human rulers to be of service to his and our love until the eschaton. B. Violence disrupts the activities of love. C. The death penalty is an effective way for human rulers to counter violence D. Therefore the death penalty is an important statute for rulers to enact.

In both of these examples concerning the death penalty one can see that the reasoning includes assumptions that may or may not be scriptural but which originate in speculations or assumptions concerning natural, empirical realities. As has been stated, such thought processes will and must take place, but their reliability is even more subject to uncertainty than those undertaken in the first tier of theological ethical inquiry. These are the two ways in which ethical concepts and speculation can be said to emerge within the framework that has been given here.

How this plays out will, as has been stated, be explained more fully in the coming chapter on love. Nonetheless, we can answer the basic question regarding how an ethical actor will engage these “natural, empirical realities.” It will remain true that such a revealed ethic can, as O’Donovan writes, describe a reality in which man “imposes order on his life, both individually and socially.”<sup>113</sup> While the present thesis will admit this to be the case, it will also emphasize that this is not the whole story. We will, as human beings, attempt to correlate and think through the relations between the Gospel-proclamation and perceived, natural realities. This has been established. Therefore, we will also, as human beings, be attentive to possible “unwitting disruption of benign interdependencies,”<sup>114</sup> but such attention will be accompanied by an understanding of the speculative and uncertain nature of such thinking.

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<sup>113</sup> O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 16.

<sup>114</sup> Alan Buchanan, *Beyond Humanity?: The Ethics of Biomedical Enhancement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 155.

The more important part of the story here is that, at the end of history, the truth of creation lies with Christ, the Logos, and in every action the Christian subject strives to make this endpoint actual. This might entail engineering our individual and social circumstances, not necessarily, but only possibly. Most importantly, however, this kind of action could and should never pretend to be the actualization of God's kingdom (although it might be) but purport to be only a faithful preparing the way of the Lord, to make his paths straight. This should, while acknowledging the possibility of "engineering," present itself as an attitude rooted, first and foremost, in humility. By saying this we have already given a provisional answer to the question/objection about the interrelationship between our theological reasoning and Christian engagement with empirical, ontological realities. However, the answer can be given in full only within a discussion of Christian love and therefore will not be pursued further in this chapter. It will suffice to have argued that, as a result of our theological starting point, natural theology is suspect unless it is circumscribed as illustrated here.

This chapter has been concerned with establishing the parameters for thinking theologically about ethics and politics. Insofar as theological ethics and political theology concern themselves to a great extent with external matters, it has been important to determine the extent to which empirical and natural actualities can be wellsprings of theological thinking. The thesis has argued for upholding distinctions between the theological and natural speculative enterprises, thereby aligning with understandings associated with revealed theology and ethics. This has been argued based on the decentring effects of the Gospel-revelation upon human subjectivity as well as the way in which the proclamation of the Gospel re-centres human thought on itself. We have also noted that, while empirical and natural actualities will necessarily enter the ethical and political deliberations of the theologian at some point, these belong to a second tier of ethical reasoning. This second tier seeks to correlate the strictly theological reasoning, which is provisional, with speculation on empirical and natural actualities which makes the judgments even less stable.

As we have established the parameters for thinking theologically concerning ethics and politics, we can now inquire into the concept of love. As in this current chapter on theology and thought, our next chapter on theology and love will begin

with an expansive view, employing broad brushstrokes. It will move from that wide perspective towards more specific description, arguments and explanations. It is our way to first establish the frame, delineate the outlines, fill them out and, finally, produce a full picture. In the coming chapter on love we will, first, find love in its two forms as eros and agape and investigate their relationship to understand whether they can both be treated under the same concept of “love.” This will prepare us, first, for understanding the nature of love more clearly. Second, if we discover that the two concepts do form or fall under a unity, our discussion will be able to show how the relationship between love and justice in politics can better figure in non-Christian love. This is important because, as explained above, the problematic of political theology is partly born in confrontation with the non-Christian neighbour. Third, after this, we will be investigating the nature of love in its relationship to that for which it strives, freedom/potentiality. If we succeed in clarifying this relationship between love and that for which it strives, it will be of help later as we seek to relate love to the concept of justice in political structures. To put it concisely, in the coming chapter we will first investigate the *internal distinctions* in love (eros and agape) and then inquire into love as manifested in its *external distinctions* (love and freedom/potentiality).

## Chapter 3

### Love

#### ***-Love in Internal and External Distinctions-***

In this chapter we will seek to understand the nature, structure and work of love by investigating it in its two primary dimensions. First, we will be examining love in light of its internal distinction and unity to understand what is included and referred to under the concept of love. This entails investigating love in both its Christian and non-Christian manifestations (agape and eros) to see whether both manifestations can be included under the same signifier, that of “love.” This will help us better understand the nature and structure of love to the extent that it serves our purposes. Also, it will help us determine how wide its reference can be with regard to political structures. The present chapter will discover that love has a primary unity in that it is structured as a process of actualization that is set in motion by the perception of potentiality and striving toward potentiality. Second, the chapter will consider love in relation to that to which it points and works, potentiality, to see whether and in what way it should be viewed in distinction from potentiality. The chapter will find that love, while seeking actualization, does not directly accomplish actualization directly, but is always mediated by hope. Faith (the perception of potentiality), sets love in motion (works directed to actualizing potentiality), which works in hope (of actualization). Importantly, although their works are not to be directly correlated in this way, faith, hope and love are, in themselves, to be understood as instances of the actualization of potentiality. Having given this brief sketch of what is to come, let us begin by considering the basic internal structure and logic of love.

#### **A. Internal Distinction: Love as Eros and Love as Agape**

In what follows we will be employing the concepts of eros and agape as a basic internal distinction within the concept of love in its full and proper form. The concepts of eros and agape have been used for centuries in discussions on love. However, it is clear that in recent history it is the work of Anders Nygren that has

pushed the conceptual opposition between the two to the forefront. And the present thesis operates somewhat in indebtedness to Nygren and in response to his legacy. Nygren's own concept of eros is derived mainly by mining a historical trajectory of a fundamental motif of love. This fundamental motif Nygren called "eros-love" and traced largely to Plato. However, Plato's notion of love, according to Nygren, was not a discovery of the motif but a re-appropriation of a fundamentally religious motif operative in the cultural milieu of ancient Greece. Nygren therefore describes Plato's hugely influential account of eros as a welding together of an ancient oriental mythos of love and the nascent Greek logos of the time.<sup>115</sup> Nygren states that the Platonic outlook is so heavily influenced by this notion of love that "the myth of eros can, in fact, be described as the central Platonic myth."<sup>116</sup> This Platonic Eros-myth is, in Nygren's mind, a salvific ideal,<sup>117</sup> one wherein "eros is the mediator between Divine and human life."<sup>118</sup> Nygren's eros-love has three chief characteristics: "(1) Eros is the 'love of desire,' or acquisitive love; (2) Eros is man's way to the Divine; (3) Eros is egocentric love."<sup>119</sup>

Yet the eros-conception is not solely a Platonic phenomenon. This motif runs through Aristotle, whom Nygren interprets as granting to eros a greater physical focus because of his intent on explaining motion in the natural world.<sup>120</sup> This secularizing tendency of the eros motif was, however, quickly lost in late antiquity with the development of Plotinus's Neoplatonism and his flair for mystery-piety. This development, according to Nygren, "means that the Eros motif takes an even more central place than before."<sup>121</sup> Nonetheless, there is a fundamental difference between Plato and Plotinus. Plotinus and Neoplatonism were much more interested, according to Nygren, in also treating the downward vector of eros and not only the ascending one. And this means a type of trouble for Nygren because, while Nygren's intent was to contrast eros's ascent with agape's descent, it would seem that Neoplatonism might escape that contrast. But Nygren insists that this is not the case,

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<sup>115</sup> Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 166–168.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 183–84.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

that Neoplatonic love does not contain a properly descending attitude. Within Neoplatonism, Nygren affirms, there is no notion of God's coming down to man. The downward vector is there only to explain how matter emanates from God, not to describe the process of salvation, which is an entirely ascending process within the Neoplatonic framework, as Nygren sees it.<sup>122</sup>

Some commentators, as we will later learn, have disputed Nygren's historical analyses as less than perfectly accurate. However, the main motifs or trajectories of eros and agape are helpful in organizing important distinctions within the concept of love. And so it is that the present thesis works with a notion of eros that is mostly consistent with the typology Nygren sketches out. However, there are two important differences. First, this thesis does not want to inflate the same type of militant opposition between the concepts of eros and agape, and this will be addressed at some length below. Second, the thesis assumes a less historical orientation than Nygren's work, instead regarding the eros-type as an antithesis to the thesis of agape-love as mediated by the Scriptures.

If this is the case, though, then an important preliminary question emerges regarding our justification for using these concepts when exegetes dispute the presence of such a strong distinction in the Scriptures despite its being maintained by some in the tradition of Christian theology.<sup>123</sup> Where do we, for example, find the notion of eros, a non-Christian form of love, stated clearly in the Scriptures, with any ideological force, as the opposite of agape-love? This is a good question. Our aim is nothing less than to speak in a way that is faithful to the Scriptures concerning such matters. In this effort we find great inspiration in looking to Anselm of Canterbury.

When Anselm wrote out his proof for the existence of God, we can affirm that he was being deeply Scriptural. Through reading the Scriptures and engaging in prayer he emerged with the concept of "that above which nothing greater can be conceived" as the name of God.<sup>124</sup> One must see that this name of God is indeed Scriptural, although one must simultaneously admit that the wording is nowhere to

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 195–197.

<sup>123</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Fra 'Eros och Agape' til Venskab: Antikkens forestilling om kærlighed i forhold til kroppen, selvet og det gode (frelsen)", ed. Rydell Johnsen & P Rønnegård (red), *Eros och Agape. Barmhertighet, kärlek och mystik i den tidiga kyrkan* (Skellefteå, Artos, Sweden, 2009) 11–27.

<sup>124</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogium*, in *St. Anselm: Basic Writings*, trans. S. N. Deane (Chicago: Open Court), 7.

be found in the very Scriptures that inspired it. As Anselm acknowledged, holding the concept of “that above which nothing greater can be conceived” in mind necessarily awoke its antithesis, its negation, that of “the non-existence” of “that above which nothing greater can be conceived.” It is well known that Anselm subsequently discovered this to be a self-contradictory concept. The affirmation of “that above which nothing greater can be conceived” was tested and strengthened by its opposition.<sup>125</sup> Of course, it remains true that Anselm’s proof of God is a brilliant example of theological reasoning insofar as his thesis becomes logically necessary in a way that cannot be said of other subsequent theological statements.

What is most important, for our purposes, however, is to notice, by way of Anselm, first, how a concept that cannot be found in the Scriptures can be thoroughly scriptural and, second, how it brings with it its own antithesis, which then is “defeated.” As we consider our present subject we can clearly see that as we encounter the Gospel we learn of the love of God who seeks communion with humankind. In this very proclamation we understand and learn about the corresponding liberty and demand for humankind to love. This human love is meant to correspond to the love of God in that it descends, gives, and reaches out. Christian love, the response to God’s initiative in love, is a love that moves towards God by moving towards the neighbour. In learning of this ex-centred love, its antithesis is awoken in the mind, that of a love which is self-centred, a self-love which moves not toward the neighbour but towards the self. As a Christian love it is inconceivable because it is the very negation of Christian love in that it is a love which is self-seeking in its primary focus. This is the fundamental element of what we want to say: first, there is a Christian love we learn of in the Gospels and, second, this Christian love brings to mind and exposes its antithesis, a non-Christian love.<sup>126</sup> Of course, one could very well continue discussing the matter of love by simply using the concepts of Christian and non-Christian love. But, in the theological literature, the concepts of eros and agape have become so firmly established that they are effective and rich as

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>126</sup> Some might question the notion of a non-Christian love as an antithesis and rather put the concept of “hate” in its stead. However, here we argue that hate is actually a possible component of love. When love is frustrated or its object threatened it can manifest as hate. The distinctive feature of Christian love is other-turning, ex-centeredness, and so its negation is the opposite of that, a self-turning, ego-centeredness.



references to love in the twofold distinction that we will be treating here. It is with this understanding that we continue to use the concepts of eros and agape as references to non-Christian and Christian love, respectively. We will further interact with possible objections to this later in the chapter.

In what follows we will seek to explain the internal distinction and unity of love through conceptual work which will focus on the eros-love of projection and the agape-love that is found in reception. From the standpoint of human subjectivity we will move linearly, from eros to agape, from the projection to the reception of the object of love. This, obviously, can create a misunderstanding and might seem to go against the grain of what we have already said concerning theology and human thought. Importantly, this is being done without implying that, in any ultimate sense, eros is chronologically prior to agape. When Plato told the story of the cave of shadows and the movement of human subjectivity from shadows to the true Forms, he was in no way suggesting the priority of the cave of shadows but merely making a didactic move. Likewise, the movement between eros and agape can be said to begin (very humanly speaking) with a movement from eros to agape (wherein, in their confrontation, agape takes control of the dialectic in that the dialectic is not between two equal conceptions) and describing this movement can help one explain the unity of and distinction between eros and agape. This is how the following narrative-like structure should be understood.

### ***i. Love as Eros, Love as Agape***

Eros, the love which alone propelled and defined humankind before its confrontation with Christ, was a form of self-seeking. Erotic humankind sought gratification of something, to appropriate something for itself. Eros defined a constant movement in search of this gratification, as eros was a kind of appetite. Humankind's every activity knew only this eros as its driving force. This form of love sought gratification but it sought it in beauty and truth, in more or less noble forms. It was humankind's eros-love, its craving for beauty and truth, its desire to extend itself over the boundaries which it always finds everywhere, which drove man to become a religious being. This is because eros's constant seeking moved humankind over each boundary up to the last boundary, to the ultimate boundary—up to the infinite divide

between time and eternity. Eros was behind humankind's every action but, standing on this boundary of time and eternity, it consumed humanity. It sought to bridge that infinite divide, to reach supreme truth and sublime beauty. It hoped to see and to taste beyond this end-line of human thought and knowledge. Standing at this abyss eros could only reach out by human thought, by making projections into the gap, into the great divide. The projections eros made were religious projections. Religion in turn became and sustained the ultimate objects of eros. Erotic appropriation became erotic projection.

By eros, by its arts, speculative thought, its lives well lived—the greatest feats of the human spirit were accomplished and sustained. Eros was no simple animal instinct which sought immediate gratification. Being confronted with the principles of reality, eros constantly sublated and transformed itself, postponing immediate gratification of its desire in order better to be able to reach its complete fulfilment. Therefore, erotic humankind had initially sought joy but found toil, sought receptiveness but found productiveness, sought absence of repression but found a security upheld by repression.<sup>127</sup> Most of all it sought Truth but, faced with the reality of the great divide between time and eternity, found nothing but religion. Erotic, religious humankind was constantly thinking and acting on the brink of the possible, seeking for its erotic, religious needs to be met.

Humankind has, therefore, erotically projected religious possibilities into the great gap which divides it from its origin and end. In these images and lyrical prose, Humankind has taken each of its own capacities and elevated them in the highest degree. The projections are the divinisation of the ultimate qualities human beings can imagine themselves possessing. Therefore, one can say that while the potentiality of an acorn is the oak tree, the potentiality of erotic humankind is religion. This is because it is in religion that humankind sets its own standard, determines its own possibility. The objects of religion are therefore the potentiality of humankind. Humankind loves its religious projections as they exhibit the ultimate objective of humankind's own possibility. But this love for religious objects takes the form of desire, the form of eros-love. Eros has, therefore, projected its ultimate desire for truth and beauty and now strives for it, hungers after it. The objects of religion are

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<sup>127</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (London: Routledge, 1987), 12.

the potentiality of humankind and it is towards this potentiality that humankind seeks to actualize its own being. Erotic humankind projects truth and beauty and then loves its own projections because it wants to be erotically united with them. Religious humankind therefore heads for the long march where it, by the sweat of its palms, seeks to actualize its religious potentiality. But religion brings a heavy burden. The potentiality humankind perceives and strives for remains ever elusive. In the end it judges humankind because humanity cannot carry the weight of its own golden statue that it has erected under the name of religion. Religion is, in the end, self-destructive. It becomes demonstrative in the negative, achieving only its own self-exposure. We can, however, claim this only because the hidden object of the fantasy of religion, God, has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. While religion so typically tried to ascend, God descended. Anders Nygren rightly writes: “Man cannot by means of Eros attain to God. Real fellowship with God is possible only if God in his Agape condescends to man.”<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, as Barth has stated: “In God men possess—as slaves do—the possibility of rebellion.”<sup>129</sup>

And as we are engaged in theology, we have to ask what happened in the encounter of eros-love and religion with the revelation of God. We should ask what happened when God revealed himself as a human being to the erotic, religious humankind. What was it that happened when humankind’s fantasy broke into its reality? How could humankind continue to think and act in such a situation? How could it continue living when all that it had built, its religion, civilization, art, all the feats of eros, were challenged by that which was its hidden object all along?

## ***ii. Love in the Confrontation: From Eros to Agape***

While humankind seeks to ascend to the divinities and potentialities it has projected, God descends. God, who is radically free, descends in a free act of love to bring humankind back into communion with himself. There is no necessity which drives God to this decision other than his own decision and act.<sup>130</sup> God wills and acts to restore communion between himself and humankind. In making this decision to

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<sup>128</sup> Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, 206.

<sup>129</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 246.

<sup>130</sup> Barth writes: “He acts with a view to the goal to which He wills to bring man, but there is not really any necessity which constrains Him to do this.” Barth, *CD IV/1:80*.

restore communion between himself and created reality God implies his journey into created reality.<sup>131</sup> Humankind cannot ascend to God. Instead God has revealed that he has made the decision to descend to humankind and to free it from the realities of sin, to its potentiality of freedom in communion. In the process, human reality is turned upside down. Importantly, as we will see, the movements of eros are inverted, as projection is transformed into reception and self-seeking is transformed into other-seeking.

### ***iii. Eros inverted: Great Giving Corresponding to a Great Reception***

It has been mentioned that erotic, religious, humankind projected potentialities for itself. Eros is a love which recognizes a worth in something and then seeks to acquire it for itself, to be erotically united with it. Eros was always a movement of ascension whereby humankind sought to move closer to that which it deemed worthy. This ascending movement of eros-love is met by the opposite movement, that of agape-love. Before its confrontation with the Gospel, erotic love had many objects of desire. But in the multiplicity of eros-loves there is always a unifying factor, an ultimate object of eros-love, by which all of the other loves are subsumed. This ultimate subsuming object of love can be anything such as the gods of family, nation, wealth, health, honour, religions or other projections. In pursuit of the ultimate object of love, eros will suppress itself in many respects so that it may reach its true fulfilment in its ultimate concern. Augustine, in his *City of God*, provided a powerful description of this process. In inquiring how it was that the Roman Empire managed to grow to its greatness in size, power and glory, Augustine comments that this is not something to be traced to Roman virtue. Rather, the Romans only seemed virtuous and acquired their greatness because “they were greedy of praise, prodigal of wealth, desirous of great glory, and content with a moderate fortune. Glory they most ardently loved: for it they wished to live, for it they did not hesitate to die. Every

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<sup>131</sup> As Barth writes: “We have already said that in this event God allows the world and humanity to take part in the history of the inner life of His Godhead, in the movement in which from and to all eternity He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and therefore the one true God. But this participation of the world in the being of God implies necessarily His participating in the being of the world, and therefore that His being, His history, is played out as world-history and therefore under the affliction and peril of all world-history.” Barth, *CD IV/1*:216.

other desire was repressed by the strength of their passion for that one thing.”<sup>132</sup> Augustine argues that all that was considered virtuous by the Romans was nothing but vice disguised as virtue.<sup>133</sup> The Romans had simply found out that by restraining their appetites they could better achieve human glory and further extend their rule and domination. The greatest love of the Romans was glory and praise. As a result their whole being was oriented towards moving them closer to this goal, to appropriate more glory for themselves. In the process, other erotic appetites were suppressed to achieve eros’ ultimate concern.

But as erotic humankind confronts the God of the Gospels something very different happens. God reveals himself to be king in an act of servanthood. Humankind learns that it lives only in the reception of a faith, hope and love which is given and made possible by God. This great reception of faith is what lays a foundation for hope, as we have established. Importantly, it is *hope* because the actualization of that which is already real in Christ cannot be forced or implemented by humankind. It can only be hoped for. Like the initial act of liberation, the subsequent actualization of its freedom is a *gift*, something which is *received* by the human subject. God’s love is one that descends, which appears in giving and servanthood. Confronted with such love, the upward, ascending strivings of eros lose their appeal. Contrary to eros, the opposite movement is set forth. Humankind must become a servant of this God who reveals his majesty in the suffering and self-giving of Jesus Christ. The only possible response, the response proclaimed in the Scriptures, is one of a love which is “great self-giving which corresponds to the great reception.”<sup>134</sup> This new love, agape, differs from eros-love because in this love humankind is turned away from itself to the realization of God’s future as promised in Christ. While eros recognizes the cultural worth and status of people (eros asks what a person is “due”), this agape-love does not ask primarily about such things before it acts. This is because agape-love is not concerned with the person as she is empirically visible but according to what she is promised in Christ, the person’s potentiality (agape asks about what the person is promised). The Christian is called to act primarily in accordance with another’s potentiality, not another’s actuality.

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<sup>132</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 5.12.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 19.25.

<sup>134</sup> Barth, *CD IV/2*:731.

How else would self-giving correspond to its great reception? This is a strict demand, but it nonetheless must be seen as the substance of this new love which is named agape. The eros-type self-seeking of humankind and its own due is transformed in agape-love, which is the movement set forth in the encounter between God and humankind.

#### ***iv. Potentiality and its Actualization***

The knowledge of this transformation is *given* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By it, it becomes evident that the cross has not been the final word. Rather, God has exhibited his power over death and destruction in this event which turns out to have been an event of re-creation, of resurrection. In the event of resurrection it is known, not only, that the old humankind has been put to death but that it has been recreated. In the resurrected Jesus Christ humankind can now see its own true, resurrected self. The body of sin, still actual and visible, has received its judgment and been proclaimed to have no future. The future belongs to the humankind which is elected in Christ and free of sin. In the preaching of the resurrected Christ, humankind learns that it will not be left alone in its condition of sin but that God has intervened on its behalf presenting it with a new reality, that of Jesus Christ who is triumphant over evil. Jesus Christ, in his triumphant love, therefore establishes and represents the future of humanity and of creation. Jesus Christ is the potentiality of the world in that humanity and all of creation will be without sin. This potentiality, Jesus Christ, who is visible in the event of resurrection, begins an actualization process within the subjects confronted with the proclamation of this event. It is a movement of actualization of the potentiality revealed in Christ which means that *it is a movement of freedom away from sin*. As a movement, it is best described by the name of love—*agape*. In this movement of love humankind's potentiality for freedom, which is real in Christ, becomes actual. God has acted in loving freedom and, in this act, freed humankind to loving service which corresponds with the freedom it already has in Christ. At the same time, this loving service is action, which is meant to bring humanity to this freedom in Christ. Love (agape) is a movement towards the actualization of the potentiality for freedom from sin which is already real in Christ.

To some this might be somewhat too concise, so let us try to clarify it further. First, the concept of potentiality, in the most important sense, is a very simple concept. Everyone has potential, a goal towards which all can grow. There can even be multiple potentials, such as the potential to be a violinist, to learn a new language, to become captain of the football team, and so on. In one person we can find a number of such potentialities. But when we use the word “potentiality” here, we are doing it in view of the fact that humankind subsumes each of its specific potentialities in a supreme understanding of a more general human potentiality which imposes its shape on the development of every other potential. When one potentiality achieves that status we are either in the realm of religion or being confronted with God who has revealed himself in Christ. In both cases, humankind believes itself to have found its true potentiality and by that we mean the goal towards which it is meant to grow. Development or growth towards a potentiality is a process which necessarily is set in motion by the knowledge of that very potentiality. Once humankind believes itself to have found its true potentiality it starts to move in that direction in a process that should be called actualization. Again, this term, “actualization,” speaks of a simple truth. It refers to the fact that knowledge of one’s potentiality imposes an overarching shape on one’s conscious and unconscious development. Such knowledge determines the movement of the actualization of the potentiality perceived. Now if we were talking only of the actualization of someone’s potentiality to speak a third language, it would not trouble us. So, neither should our use of potentiality and actuality within the current scheme trouble us.

But why, someone might ask, is the actualization process described as one that leads us away from sin? As was just stated, “Christ is the potentiality of the world in that humanity and all of creation will be without sin.”<sup>135</sup> Also, it was stated that “the future belongs to the humankind which is elected in Christ and free of sin. In the preaching of the resurrected Christ, humankind learns that it will not be left alone in its condition of sin but that God has intervened on its behalf presenting it with a new reality, that of Christ who is triumphant over evil.”<sup>136</sup> It follows necessarily that the actualization of the potentiality revealed in Christ is a movement of freedom away from sin. But why, someone might further question, is this

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<sup>135</sup> See page 69.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

movement said to be best described by the name of love—agape? That is a very good question. The reason, as will be better explained below, is that human wisdom and human freedom are imperfect and cannot, directly and by themselves, accomplish the future of freedom promised in the Gospel. Human activity must therefore be mediated by another concept which describes the movement towards that which the human being holds to be of value. Love is the perfect concept for that. This will be further treated in a later sub-chapter called: “External Distinction: Love and Freedom/Potentiality.”

#### ***v. An Interlude on the Concepts of Potentiality and Actuality***

Let us pause briefly to give some context to the concepts of potentiality and actuality. These words form a vocabulary that can help us convey deep and important truths which are relevant to our project of political theology. And although the reader might already have received some idea of the concepts, a short note might draw a fuller picture. Originally Aristotle made a very deliberate use of the two concepts in his attempt to make sense of the notion of *change*. This question of change is immensely important to Aristotle as can be seen in the fact that one of his greatest criticisms of his teacher Plato is that Plato’s Forms contribute little to sensible things, “for they are not the cause of any motion or change in them.”<sup>137</sup> Aristotle’s categories of potentiality and actuality are therefore constructed to help Aristotle resolve this fundamental problem of how change occurs.<sup>138</sup> To explain, in simple terms, how Aristotle applies the concepts one can say that the seed of a plant has the *potentiality* of what the grown plant is in *actuality*. This means that one can say that the *actuality* of the plant exhibits the ultimate *potentiality* of the seed. At the same time, as the seed grows to become a plant, the *actuality* of the seed is one of *being and of not being* the plant.<sup>139</sup>

The trouble for Aristotle is that of explaining the movement (as the seed changes from being a seed to being a plant) in which a thing both “is” and “is not” something. What is a thing that both is and is not something? What is the seed as it

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<sup>137</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), 707 (991a).

<sup>138</sup> Clare Carlisle, *Metaphysics of Motion, Kierkegaard’s Philosophy of Becoming*, SUNY Series in Theology and Continental Thought (New York: The State University of New York Press, 2005), 12.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



sheds its actuality as a seed and actualizes its potentiality as a plant? The question, in the end, is: How can we explain change? This is a serious problem with which Aristotle grappled eloquently. The medieval scholastic philosophers, as Aristotle's writings resurfaced in Europe, wrestled with this same problematic and felt themselves strictly bound by Aristotle's arguments.<sup>140</sup> However, the history of the concepts took a decisive turn with Martin Luther's anti-Aristotelian and anti-scholastic Reformation. But introducing Martin Luther as anti-Aristotelian should not give be taken to imply that there are no continuities between Luther and Aristotle. In fact, as Theodor Dieter has shown,<sup>141</sup> Luther was, in many respects, in continuity with Aristotelian thinking. For example, in an important sense, Luther can be said to have accepted the Aristotelian problematic of change. But, more importantly than being a reader of Aristotle, Martin Luther was a firm believer in the Word and Promise of God in Scripture which proclaimed to him that humankind was *both* sinful and yet redeemed. Luther therefore confronted a problematic that was very similar to Aristotle's. How can humankind be both sinful and perfectly righteous in Christ? How can one make sense of this scriptural truth about the status of humankind?

It is here that Martin Luther took a very interesting turn. He said, in light of this, that change should be explained as a repeated dialectic wherein, at every moment, human beings are both sinners and redeemed. The famous phrasing that Martin Luther employed for this was *simul iustus et peccator*. In effect, Luther cut the Gordian knot of the Aristotelian problematic or, rather, caused it to implode. When faced with humankind as both sinful and redeemed, Luther placed each description of humankind on the opposite side of a two-sided flip-book and then set it in an ever-intense rotation. A two-sided flip-book in intense rotation can make two pictures seem to merge into one while the single picture is, in fact, comprised of two distinct pictures. Humankind's potentiality of being "iustus," like Christ, was already real; and humankind's potentiality of being "peccator" was simultaneously real. The human being was thus understood to be fully sinful and fully righteous.

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<sup>140</sup> See Helen S. Lang, *Aristotle's Physics and its Medieval Varieties* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).

<sup>141</sup> See Theodor Dieter, *Der Junge Luther und Aristoteles: Eine Historisch-Systematische Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Philosophie*, Theologische Bibliothek Töpelmann 105 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001).

Now the obvious problem with Luther's very important construal of the notion of change is the nature of this dialectic. It may seem as if it is a dialectic between two equals in that the change is not dominated by either side of the dialectic. For, how can the reality of humankind as "peccator" be just as real as its being "iustus"? Would that not suggest that the reality of the Gospel is on par with the reality of sin? Would it not risk presenting the two equals in a duel? Apart from the possibility of such problematics, Martin Luther had taken a very important step and accomplished a conceptual revolution. Later Protestant theologians would find ways of better securing the position of the Gospel, God's sovereignty and humankind's position as "iustus" (although it is debatable whether this was already achieved by Calvin or whether it is with Karl Barth that one first finds precisely such a construal). Importantly, in Barth's theology, one can say that the Gospel holds and controls the dialectic. In the dialectic of change between "iustus" and "peccator" we discover the negation of "iustus" by "peccator" itself to have been negated and, ultimately, defeated. If it were not, it would not be the Gospel of the sovereign God who loves in perfect freedom.<sup>142</sup> Thus although there is a dialectic between judgment and salvation it does not involve an unstable dialectic between equals but rather one in which the promise of "iustus" holds sway and, in fact, cedes no real terrain to the part of the human being that has not yet reached its potentiality in Christ. In fact, the parts of human beings which are still in opposition to salvation in Christ are denied any ultimate reality. The actuality of that which is not the potentiality of Christ, of "iustus," is not true actuality in that it has no ultimate reality, in that it has already been defeated by God's merciful action in Christ.

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<sup>142</sup> Barth writes: "Does this mean that we must apply to them the term 'dialectic'? The answer is a decided negative if by 'dialectic' we mean thinking in contradiction or in reconciliation of two principles. But the term might be used if what we have in mind is the alternation of divine speech and human answer indubitably envisaged by the Old and New Testament witnesses." See Barth, *CD* IV/3:195. Barth then continues: "The antithesis can arise only to show that it has no solidity and therefore to move to its overcoming. In the event of reconciliation as the restoration of peace between God and man there is no static counterpoise, vacillation or balance. Again, in the justification of man there is no immobile simul of the homo iustus and the homo peccator. In sanctification, too, there is no armistice between the being of the new man and that of the old . . . God is not God in vain. Nor is it in vain that the One who acts in this history and therefore conducts this war is the eternal Son of God. Nor is it in vain that as the Son of Man He is man exalted to fellowship with God. It is not in vain that He is the great Prophet, the living Word of the living God. The fact that He allows opposition does not mean that He accepts it. The fact that He attacks and defends does not mean that this exhausts His work, or that He will be continually engaged in conflict." See *ibid.*, 196.

This discussion of these important concepts might seem, at first glance, problematic insofar as we have not provided a point of reference regarding the constant challenge posed by the non-Christian in political theology. But it so happens that this is one of the great assets of making use of the categories of potentiality and actuality, as they can be used to make sense of a very important human dimension which can be accessed both theologically and non-theologically. Or, perhaps better: the non-theological can be accessed theologically through these concepts. So it is that we can see how, in the Christian faith, human potentiality is found with the Risen Christ. The Risen Christ is an accomplishment and proclamation of a redeemed, recreated humanity without the brokenness and shackles of sin. At the same time erotic, religious humankind finds its potentiality in the objects of its desires as portrayed by the projections of religion. What we have therefore done is to access theologically a possibility of discussing, simultaneously, the nature of Christian and non-Christian humanity. In using the vocabulary of potentiality and actuality, we have a way of assessing, structurally, the nature of humankind's relationship to its objects of worship. Human beings have a potentiality, signified by the supreme object of their worship and love. This applies as much to the faithful Christian as it does to erotic, religious humankind (whether in its basest or highest expressions). As human beings find or are confronted with this supreme object of love and worship, their entire being takes on the direction of that object. What ensues is the actualization of human potentiality. Christians know their true humanity in Christ and erotic, religious humankind finds its goals in the projections of religion. The movement which ensues, in both cases, is that of love. But as has been established there is an immense difference in the nature of the objects of worship. Christian love of God transforms love into agape, loving service, while eros remains the guiding force of religion. On that note, let us abandon this detour into the concepts of potentiality and actuality, and continue with our inquiry into love as eros and agape. We have still to explain their unity and their difference more clearly and fully.

#### ***vi. Eros and Agape? Yes and No***

Throughout this chapter we have seen eros and agape presented as two types of love and yet our narrative has been filled with their seemingly conflicted juxtapositions.

The movements of eros have been represented as the opposite to that of agape as have its motives and its objects. However, what also emerges is the unity in distinction which makes it possible for us to treat the two under the same signifier of love. As we look at the two loves there is a clear similarity in the way they function *structurally*. Both eros-love and agape-love have love for a supreme object and both have a potentiality towards which they seek to actualize. In the multiplicity of eros-loves there is always a unifying factor, the ultimate object of eros-love, by which every one of the other loves is subsumed. When we consider agape it is obvious that there is a supreme object of love to be found there as well, the God revealed in Jesus Christ. But in confrontation with this object of Christian love something very different happens from what occurs in the Roman love of glory or any other human religion. No matter how radically different the two loves are in this sense there is still obviously a structural connection between them. Human beings have a supreme object of love by which every other love is subsumed. This determines their perception of their potentiality, further determining the ensuing actualization process of Love, whether it be eros or agape.

Our narrative also posits other connections, such as how eros can be seen as *self-exposing* and therefore pointing towards agape. As our narrative unfolded it showed how eros and religion try to ascend where they cannot ascend. The self-righteous potentiality that erotic, religious humankind strives for remains ever elusive. As was said above, religion is demonstrative in the negative, insofar as it points to truth by its self-defeat. And this is where a link is established between eros-love and agape-love. It is exactly in eros's own self-defeat that it points beyond itself, when humankind exhausts its capacity for striving. And although this self-negating moment of religion is not a positive revelation which points directly to agape, it nevertheless makes a strange reference to that which it is not. As Barth writes, "Whenever the Gentiles grow sceptical of the righteousness of men, there is exposed to them the righteousness of God."<sup>143</sup> He further states: "What is pleasing to God comes into being when all human righteousness is gone, irretrievably gone,

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<sup>143</sup> Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, 66.

when men are uncertain and lost, when they have abandoned all ethical and religious illusions.”<sup>144</sup>

This emphasizes another point, namely that God does wrest good out of evil and transforms negative to positive, a curse into a blessing. In the same way it can be understood that God can bring something *good* out of *eros*. Humankind is driven by this self-acquisitive desire of eros, looking for something to fulfil it. In its search it might move from object to object, from religion to religion, all the while driven by this strange thirst. Somewhere, along the way, it will be confronted by the God of the Gospels. In this confrontation, eros is transformed and the movement of agape is set in motion. Importantly, however, eros’s self-seeking can be used as a vehicle, and thereby agape can be brought out of eros. A movement of desire is confronted with that which was its hidden object all along. We can therefore discern three main connections between eros and agape: i) Structural; ii) self-exposure of eros, pointing to agape; and iii) divine transformation of eros into agape.

### ***vii. On Bringing in Nygren: Problems and Reasons***

Someone might be surprised to find, in the present work, a positive appropriation of Nygren’s distinction between eros and agape, albeit a chastened one. Let us digress briefly to explain why this route has been taken. After all, Nygren’s thesis, which has been greatly influential, has come under increasing fire from several directions. Nygren has been accused of not having a sufficient exegetical case to support his firm distinction between Eros and Agape. It has also been argued that love is, phenomenologically, too complex to be placed in such simple, stark categories as eros and agape. Furthermore, some argue that the word “agape” is ambiguous as it has been employed and that it therefore lacks the conceptual power ascribed to it by Nygren. These are, of course, only three grounds of attack against the Nygrenian thesis. But they represent very basic criticisms that might threaten the thesis at its core. They attack the exegetical, phenomenological, and semantic grounds of the agape/eros distinction. Let us briefly describe and respond to each of these critiques before continuing with the main argument of the thesis.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 68.

1. Many have wanted to challenge Nygren's *exegetical* work, which attempts to find ways in which New Testament usage of the concepts depart from their typical interpretations. Such an approach is an attempt to break the Nygrenian thesis on exegetical grounds by finding exceptions to the New Testament usage of "agape." If successful, such research is meant to reveal a lack of unity in the usage of the concept in the New Testament and thereby break down the general thesis about agape and eros. Such criticism can be found, for example, in James Barr's "Words for Love in Biblical Greek"<sup>145</sup> and in Troels Engberg-Pedersen's "Fra Eros Och Agape."<sup>146</sup> Both are well argued and make an excellent case against the standard Nygrenian account.

Yet despite the solid scholarship portrayed in such research, there is something incomplete in such an approach to the task of exegesis and theology. When confronted with such scholarly work one is reminded that there remains something very true about Niebuhr's attitude towards this type of scientific practice, as quoted in chapter 1: "an elaborate scientific enterprise may result in a totally unjustified nominalism, unable to apprehend general and universal characteristics under an obviously unique phenomenon." Niebuhr is right insofar as breaking everything to its extreme particularity does not necessarily help one see a phenomenon more clearly. Rather, it can also threaten to dissolve every phenomenon, to break every meaning of every concept in a "scientific" refusal to see general patterns or events for what they are. Pressing that point, as he discusses the Christian understanding of man's sinful tendency to egocentricity, Niebuhr notes that some academics view this as a dogmatic assumption and therefore untenable. These academics then, instead, proceed to "uncover evidence that particular forms of egocentricity are the consequence of particular causes. This is indeed a fact," writes Niebuhr. But then he continues: "But preoccupation with this fact tempts a scientific culture to obscure the more general human phenomenon which underlies the

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<sup>145</sup> James Barr, "Words for Love in Biblical Greek", *The Glory of Christ in the New Testament*, ed. L. D. Hurst and N. T. Wright, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 3–18.

<sup>146</sup> Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Fra 'Eros och Agape' til Venskab: Antikkens forestilling om kærlighed i forhold til kroppen, selvet og det gode (frelsen)", *Eros och Agape. Barmhertighed, kærlighed og mystik i den tidlige kirke*, ed. Rydell Johnsén & P. Rønnegård, (Skellefteå Artos: Sweden, 2009) 11–27.

particular social and psychic causes of particularly excessive or unique forms of egotism.”<sup>147</sup>

Niebuhr’s observation remains true and it may also be applied to the type of New Testament exegesis under discussion here. When encountering such well-argued objections as those proffered by Engberg-Pedersen and Barr we must remember Niebuhr’s warning and go back to the basics of agape as Christian love. When encountering seeming exceptions to the general observation, it seems that these exegetes are very quick to discard the most important point of Nygren’s argument. This method can lead them all the way to dismissing Nygren’s well-argued thesis that there is such a thing as a specifically Christian love that can be discerned in the New Testament. It might be true, certainly, that Nygren made some hyperbolic statements with regards to Christian love, signified by his concept of agape. But even though the hyperbole is not tenable in its strictest sense, it may nevertheless contain truth as hyperbole. This is something Karl Barth realized when he accepted the Nygrenian thesis but also warned against its polemical juxtaposition of the concepts (eros and agape) as contrary to the inner logic of Scripture, an important point to which we will return.<sup>148</sup>

Furthermore, as a general point, it seems impossible to conclude from reading the New Testament that there is no such thing as a specifically Christian love which can be distinguished from eros-love by virtue of the supreme object of Christian love, which is the God who reveals himself as descending to humankind in Jesus Christ. One wonders whether we find, in this form of criticism of Nygren, a type of exegesis that fails to see the forest for the trees. The importance of the exegetical or historical objections could, therefore, easily be overemphasized. It is obvious that the drive behind Nygren’s use of the concept of agape is strictly theological. There is a guiding realization that the Gospel of Christ points towards another shape of love, a different kind of love from the one described, for example, by ancient thinkers such as Plato. But to make a conceptual differentiation between these kinds of love requires *actual concepts*. And what concept was better suited to describe this specifically Christian form of love than agape? As Barr notes,<sup>149</sup> the word “agape” is

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<sup>147</sup> Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems*, 17.

<sup>148</sup> See: Barth, CD IV/2:735. See also: Barth, CD IV/2:747.

<sup>149</sup> Barr, “Words for Love in Biblical Greek”, 12.

used in deliberate ways by New Testament writers to convey something different from its conventional use, although he and Nygren might differ regarding the extent and nature of this use. Now, it might strictly be true that much of the argument for the radical linguistic purity of the New Testament usage of the word “agape” cannot be sustained. However, this would not make “agape” an improper signifier to be used to point to a specifically Christian love. And that is exactly what Nygren did.

2. There are those who would say that love is simply *phenomenologically* more complex than Nygren’s harsh juxtaposition might suggest. Thomas Jay Oord is highly critical of Nygren and is more comfortable treating love as a heading for three types of love: eros, agape and filia (friendship-love). C. S. Lewis in his *The Four Loves* goes even further and identifies the four forms of love as affection, friendship, eros and charity.<sup>150</sup> Such attempts at providing a “richer” interpretation of the concept of love might suggest that Nygren’s treatment is too simplistic and not in line with the general human experience of love. But such a contention misses something fundamental. Certainly a phenomenon such as love can be subdivided into various elemental forms (friendship, affection, etc.). But in the discussion of eros and agape one is looking at a much bigger picture, one that has to do with the fact that humankind always has a supreme object of love which subordinates every other love. The nature of this object determines *every other form of love* and it is here that the eros/agape distinction becomes a pivotal conceptual apparatus. Eros helpfully denotes the love of human religion, while agape points to the love of Christian faith. The two, within the conceptual domain of this thesis, help to make sense of fundamental theological truths which have to do with an important difference between the self-revealing, descending God of the suffering servant Jesus Christ and the objects of human religion.

3. Finally, some maintain that there is a very basic *semantic* problem with the concept of agape. They would maintain that “agape” can be, and has been, used in such a variety of ways that it borders on the vacuous and lacks an obvious, distinct meaning. Both Gene Outka and Thomas Oord attribute the many descriptions of agape to a wide range of thinkers. Outka argues that “agape in particular is often

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<sup>150</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, (London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd, 1960), 42–133.



characterized by both variance and ambiguity.”<sup>151</sup> Oord collects some modern descriptions of agape, (e.g., “unconditional willing of the good”—Timothy Jackson; “the simple yet profound recognition of the worthiness of and goodness in persons”—Bernard Brady; “understanding, redeeming good will for all men”—Martin Luther King Jr.; “self-sacrifice”—Reinhold Niebuhr; “selfless altruism”—Mike Martin; “Letting be”—John Macquarry; and so forth)<sup>152</sup> There are two main questions that we must ask in response to this challenge. How very different are these descriptions of agape? And, secondly, what would a discovery of multifarious descriptions of agape really tell us? To begin with the second question, it seems that distinct descriptions of the concept of agape tell us very little by themselves. Why should anyone draw the conclusion that the theological concept is vacuous based on such an observation? Could one not simply investigate the various attempts at “capturing the essence” of agape and test them theologically? Can they not be tested for accuracy and substance? It seems that there is little warrant for assuming that, because there are diverse opinions about a matter, none of them can be accurate, allowing one arbitrarily to give “agape” whatever meaning one likes. And, concerning the first question, it still stands by itself as a rhetorical question serving as a counter-argument: As one reads through the various abovementioned descriptions of Agape, how very different are they really?

### ***viii. Bringing nuance to Nygren***

However justified Nygren may be in drawing his conceptual distinctions, his forceful juxtapositions of the concepts create the illusion that the boundaries between the two kinds of love are marked by a thick iron wall, rather than being intermingled within every human being, the Christian faith and human religion. The Nygrenian thesis is even in danger of placing the Old Testament concept of love in opposition to Christian love.

It remains true that the Christ event helps to make available to our rational reflection a certain notion of love. The present thesis has told a story to that effect.

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<sup>151</sup> Gene Outka, *Agape*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 258.

<sup>152</sup> Quotes are taken from Thomas Jay Oord, *Defining Love*, (Michigan, USA, Brazos Press, USA, 2010), 37–38.

However, such didactic story-telling does not mean that, in actuality, God's grace was not active prior to the Christ event. It cannot mean or entail that his grace was unable to manifest this truest form of love with the Hebrews or people of other religions and spiritual attitudes. The strength and the power of the Christ event in manifesting agape-love cannot entail such a limitation on the freedom and grace of God. Just as Abraham could be justified by faith before the Christ-event so the Hebrews must have been able to become agents of agape-love.

Karl Barth has very important lessons to teach Nygren regarding the overly zealous oppositional juxtaposition of eros-love to agape-love. However open Barth is to Nygren's conceptualizations, he finds that they are too rigid and militant in tone. Barth writes of this constant Nygrenian fascination with the antithesis:

A presentation of Christian love cannot live by this antithesis, or be confined to a development of this problem. "Love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up" ( 1 Cor.13<sup>4</sup>)—even in its relationship with erotic love. How it disavows itself if it regards it as its only greatness to be different from this love, not to be "as this publican," to nourish itself constantly on this opposition! It is a strangely loveless love which is content with that. Above all, it does not need to insist rigidly on this antithesis.<sup>153</sup>

Also, in this aggressive polarization, there is a failure of confidence in this love of which Nygren supposes himself to be an advocate. Barth continues:

Christian love does not need to measure itself by eros-love, or to find strength and satisfaction in its difference from it. It lives its own life as the love which is true because it is grounded in God's love for man and not in man's self-love. It does so in antithesis to that other. But it does so as the love which is superior and triumphant in this antithesis. It is not, therefore, forced to insist on this antithesis.<sup>154</sup>

Furthermore, there is, within the Nygrenian account, a lack of humility, compassion or appreciation of the gifts that we have received on account of eros-love. Barth adds:

In the case of Christians, in a crude or subtle form (and perhaps both) they all love in this way too, according to the standards of this very different love. Thus they are all the first to be convicted by whatever may be said for the one love and against the other. And they have so much to do to wipe clean their own slate that it will be a long time before they can be too loud in their exaltation of Christian love and condemnation of the theoretical and practical forms of the other (whether Greek or otherwise). But above all reserve is

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<sup>153</sup> Barth, *CD* IV/2:746.

<sup>154</sup> Barth, *CD* IV/2:747.

enjoined by the fact that this other love can claim some of the greatest figures in the history of the human spirit, whom it would be a highly questionable enterprise to reject and repudiate in a curt and dogmatic Christianity, especially on the part of those who do not really know them and cannot therefore estimate them at their true worth. It has also to be taken into account that all of us (even we Christians) exist in a world which in its best and finest as well as its most basic phenomena is for the most part built upon this other rather than Christian love, and that we live by the works and fruits and achievements of this love, so that when the Christian calls it in question in the light of Christian love he always takes on a highly ambiguous appearance.<sup>155</sup>

In this way, it turns out, Nygren's account of love is, perhaps ironically, somewhat lacking in neighbourly love and compassion. Adding to this, the hyper-inflated result of Nygren's overzealous attitude also leads to a confused estimation of self-love, a phenomenon towards which Nygren is sceptical. Oliver O'Donovan has traced Nygren's scepticism towards self-love as having its "profoundest motivation" in Nygren's negative attitude towards the eudaemonian framework of ethics. Such an anti-eudaemonian framework for Christian ethics "presents self-denial and the selfish pursuit of personal happiness . . . as sharply contrasted but not diametrically opposed."<sup>156</sup> Why is it so important for Nygren to make this case against a eudaemonian framework, and therefore self-love (even though it is implicitly included in Jesus's command to love your neighbour as yourself)? The reason is that Nygren begins with a strong commitment to demonstrating the irreconcilable difference between eros, self-acquisitive love, and agape, self-giving love. Therefore, any framework that keeps human happiness in view is problematic in light of the Nygrenian mission in that it threatens to be self-acquisitive. But O'Donovan shows how this hyper-vigilance is unnecessary and, in the end, insubstantial. Self-denial can easily be translated into a eudaemonian framework in that the contention that every act aspires to some good can relate "as much to giving, loving, renouncing." The Nygrenian is then left saying that a "eudaemonist formulation of Christ's demand for self-denial robs it of its starkness."<sup>157</sup> O'Donovan thereby concludes that the critique is directed "less against the morality of eudaemonist concepts . . . than against their

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<sup>155</sup> Barth, *CD* IV/2:735.

<sup>156</sup> O'Donovan, *The Problem of Self Love in St. Augustine* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 153.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

*epistemological efficiency* as a linguistic vehicle for Christian ethics.”<sup>158</sup> Therefore, in the end, the Nygrenian attitude of taking no prisoners ends up throwing the baby out with the bathwater and, in turn, risks others doing the same in regard to his own work on eros and agape.

So, while we can appreciate Nygren’s work, we must be careful not to be too enamoured by the conceptual oppositions and the militant attitude which dominates his *Eros and Agape*. Conceptual distinctions have their place and are a condition of human thinking. But both our lives and the Scriptures have a great deal more nuance than conceptual distinctions would allow for.

Having said this, the unity between eros and agape which the present thesis wants to emphasize most is that which we mentioned first: the structural unity, which emphasizes that both forms of love are processes of actualization directed towards a potentiality. This will prove helpful when we inquire into Christian love in the mode of political action as it then finds itself in cohabitation/confrontation with other forms of love.

## **B. External Distinction: Love and Freedom/Potentiality**

The thesis has now investigated love by looking to its internal structure as actualization towards potentiality. At this point we should seek to understand love by looking into how it relates to that to which it points, potentiality. We want to know whether love and potentiality are *co-extensive* or *distinct* and in what way this might be true. What we will discover is that, while love is born out of recognition of potentiality, love’s own activity is not co-extensive with but distinct from potentiality. The Christian potentiality (which is freedom), we will therefore discover, is distinct from love and yet to serves as its ground and goal. After considering the implications of this construal of the relationship between the two concepts, we will arrive at a better understanding of love’s structure and work.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

### ***i. Potentiality: The Ground and Goal of Love***

We claimed above that the perception of the potentiality of freedom in Christ sets in motion an actualization process whereby love initiates its movement.<sup>159</sup> Here it is important to note that the movement towards actualization is not equated with that which is its ground and goal. That is to say: *Freedom and love are not equated*. To spell it out even further: The actualization of freedom is no simple translation from potentiality to actuality when viewed from the standpoint of the Christian subject as it seeks to act towards potentiality. This was anticipated above where it was maintained that freedom and love are distinct phenomena and that human action cannot directly, or by itself, accomplish the future of freedom promised in the Gospel. Let us clarify that statement: The human potentiality of freedom in Christ sets in motion a human movement toward the actualization of the potentiality perceived. This movement, made possible by the perception of the potentiality of freedom, has its goal in the potentiality of freedom. This entails that potentiality is *both* the ground *and* the goal of the process of actualization. Furthermore, this actualization process is a movement of love towards the potentiality of freedom. But, importantly, no single act of love can be undertaken in the human certainty that it directly accomplishes the potentiality for which it strives. This is because any such certainty or direct correspondence of action and actualization of potentiality is reserved for God, while human actions are undertaken only under the banner of hope. *Faith* (perception of the potentiality of freedom) sets in motion *Love* (actualization) and loving actions are accompanied by the *Hope* that potentiality may be accomplished. This is why, in reference to the human, we say that freedom and love are not equated and that potentiality and actualization are in an imperfect relationship, mediated by hope.

We draw this boundary for two reasons. First, it would be insufficiently theological, given the parameters that have been set here, to describe humankind's actions as equal or univocal to that of God's. God is "that above which nothing greater can be conceived," so such descriptions would misrepresent the God who reveals himself in Christ. God's attributes of wisdom, freedom, love, justice, and so

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<sup>159</sup> See page 69.

on are not only divine and perfect, they also form a perfect unity.<sup>160</sup> God does act and God's actions influence and shape those confronted with his acts. So, God's acts of self-giving love set in motion corresponding actions with human beings that see themselves as recipients of those acts. They, in correspondence, engage in actions of self-giving love. But there is an important difference between God's action and corresponding human actions. Only God loves in perfect freedom. His loving will and determinations are in no way frustrated or hindered as his freedom is perfect freedom.<sup>161</sup> There is therefore only an analogy and no equality between the acts of God and the actions of humankind.

The second reason for drawing this boundary is necessarily connected to the first. It is the fact that humankind lives in the interim period between sin and salvation, "the already" and "not yet" of the consummation of God's decision and act for humankind's freedom in communion. The human existence in this "interim period" of the "already and not yet" causes the human virtues to be imperfect and this imperfection of the human virtues is, furthermore, found in their imperfect unity. The imperfection of human wisdom and human freedom breaks the unity between love and freedom. When humankind engages in acts for the cause of freedom/potentiality it is frustrated by its imperfect wisdom (faulty judgment) and imperfect freedom. This means not only that human freedom is not the divine freedom that directly accomplishes that for which it hopes, but also that it is in an imperfect relationship to love in that the two are not in perfect unity.

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<sup>160</sup> Karl Barth writes on this topic: "Therefore, explicitly or implicitly, when we speak of the love of God we shall have to speak also of His freedom, when we speak of His freedom we shall have to speak also of His love, and when we speak of one individual aspect we shall have to speak also of all the others. But if we do not wish to deviate from Scripture, the unity of God must be understood as this unity of His love and freedom which is dynamic and, to that extent, diverse. What we have here is, then, a complete reciprocity in the characterisation of the one Subject. Always in this reciprocity each of the opposing ideas not only augments but absolutely fulfils the other, yet it does not render it superfluous or supplant it. On the contrary, it is only in conjunction with the other—and together with it affirming the same thing—that each can describe the Subject, God." Barth *CD* II/1:344.

<sup>161</sup> Again, Barth writes concerning God's attributes: "If we have interpreted the divinity of His act, or the divinity of God, as freedom, we could not and cannot mean by this notion of freedom anything different from Himself as the One who loves. We cannot mean a 'universal' in which He merely participates as the One who loves. We can mean and characterise only the manner, the utterly unique manner, of His love. His loving is, as we have seen, utterly free, grounded in itself, needing no other, and yet also not lacking in another, but in sovereign transcendence giving, communicating itself to the other. In this freedom it is the divine loving. But we must also say, conversely, that only in this divine loving is the freedom described by us divine freedom." *Ibid.*, 321.

Therefore, when the human being perceives the truth of its freedom in Christ this does indeed propel that human being to action. This was established in our descriptions of potentiality and actualization. However, such action is not the simple actualization of that which is already real in Christ. The sequence does not go from i) “freedom perceived” to ii) “freedom actualized.” This would be a human presumption and improperly theological in that it would refuse to recognize the difference between Creator and creature. It is very true that the Christian faith lives in the promise that freedom will be actualized. But this does not entail that every human action will be an action that directly accomplishes the actualization of God’s gift of freedom. Rather, the promise is that, in spite of the brokenness of human actions, they can be engaged with in the firm hope that in their brokenness they can and will be turned to good—bent under the glorious future of freedom. Human actions that hope to correlate themselves to the actions of the God who loves in freedom should therefore rightly be called loving actions. They are not to be described as actions of freedom although they do signify a new subjectivity that is accomplished by the knowledge of freedom. Rather, they are human actions which mirror God’s actions without ever being on par with God’s actions. While humankind loves, God loves in perfect freedom. The human schema should therefore be understood to be i) freedom perceived (Faith), ii) loving action (Love), and iii) the hope of the actualization of freedom (Hope).

We explained above in the discussion of eros-love that the inherent danger for religion is that it will not recognize its own limitations. It is, therefore, in constant risk of beginning to understand its loving actions as contributing perfectly, without doubt, to the actualization of that for which it longs and hopes. In short, the temptation of the religious concept of love is that it can be seen as another step in the ladder of religious ascendancy. According to the erotic concept of love, humankind can make directly real that very freedom for which it hopes by the work of its own hands, attempting again to build a bridge between the (humanly) unbridgeable realms of time and eternity. The concept of love is in danger of being blotted out when freedom is, in that way, understood to be actualized directly by human actions.

In one sense such a development would be understandable. For why retain a notion of loving action as a bridge between the perceiving and actualization of

freedom when freedom can be actualized directly and without hindrance? Why uphold a schema of i) “freedom perceived,” ii) “loving action,” and iii) “freedom actualized”? If there is understood to be no limitation or frustration for human judgments and human actions, why not just say: i) “freedom perceived” and ii) “freedom actualized”? Understandable as such developments may be, theologically they fail to integrate the imperfection of human judgment and human freedom, as will be better explained below. What we are saying here must not be misunderstood. It will be recognized that every action of the human being is accompanied with the hope that freedom may be actualized and that the world may become a better place in the long run. However, the important word in that sentence is *hope*.

Let us take an example. A person might decide to alleviate hunger in certain villages in the Third World with a twofold hope: That less hunger might bring comfort and then give the local inhabitants pause from their strivings to freely receive God into their lives. Next, a decision will have to be made about *how* to do this. A certain course of action will have to be taken and the person might decide to bring food by the truckloads and distribute it among the people of the particular region. But the question remains whether this action undertaken actually serves the purpose intended. And the answers are debated. There are those who would want to argue that hunger relief of this kind is detrimental to some regions. They would maintain that, in the long run, such gifting of supplies paralyzes local agricultural development and industries in the region, making it ever poorer and more dependent on aid. If this were true (which it might be or might not be) it seems that the action undertaken accomplishes the very opposite of that which was intended. Perhaps, in the long run, it might even prevent the actualization of freedom.

This connects back to the previous chapter on theological rationality in ethics, where we found that there are two tiers of ethical deliberation, and that it is within the second tier where contextual, natural and empirical speculation enter, that our intellectual certainty grows dimmer.

People engage in loving actions all the time in the *hope* that the world may become better through their strivings and in the *hope* that their actions correspond to the truth they perceive as ultimate. Human actions can be loving actions. But do they always actualize freedom? Are love and freedom to be equated? In the above



example, the person may be said to have engaged in loving action but the question remains whether the action accomplishes the freedom of a better world. Love and freedom cannot be equated in the knowledge and actions of human beings. We are not suggesting that people should *not hope* that their actions contribute to the actualization of freedom but rather precisely that they should *firmly hope* so. Having the humility not to pretend that one holds God's view and to understand that every good we do is always subject to judgment is pivotal. Saying that certain human actions are the work of freedom is assuming a position of knowledge that human beings do not have. Rather, we must say that all the actions in which humankind engages (because it perceives itself to be free and hopes to partake in making freedom a reality) are works of love. Human beings should act, hope and pray, knowing always that whilst their actions are under judgment they can trust that God can transform misguided works of love into freedom. That is to say, our works of love may be transformed so that freedom is actualized. The human condition nevertheless remains one in which human actions, whilst driven by the understanding and hope for freedom, are rightly characterized as loving actions. And as has been stated, freedom can therefore be said to be love's ground and goal. It is by the knowledge of freedom in faith (ground) and the promise of freedom in hope (goal) that love is made active.

Interestingly, Reinhold Niebuhr would want to contradict this conclusion by arguing that "love is the only final structure of freedom."<sup>162</sup> This is because, within Niebuhr's theoretical schema, human freedom is what makes it possible for love to enter into historical reality. This might appear surprising given that Niebuhr's notions of freedom and love as a possibility have been criticized for being only nominally a possibility and not a reality.<sup>163</sup> Indeed, Niebuhr's writing concerning these matters can be somewhat elusive and the meaning he places on his concepts can be difficult to identify. But it is certain that Niebuhr wants to maintain that there is such a thing as human freedom which transcends any notions of either universal or traditioned reason.

As Niebuhr writes: "The real situation is that man transcends his own reason, which is to say that he is not bound in his actions by reason's coherences and

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<sup>162</sup> Niebuhr, "Christian Faith and Natural Law," 50.

<sup>163</sup> Hauerwas, *Dispatches from the Front*, 121.

systems. His concept of freedom consists in a capacity for self-transcendence in infinite regression.”<sup>164</sup> There is, therefore, with Niebuhr, a notion of human freedom which can offset human equilibriums, systems and traditions. Interestingly, as is proven by the quote above, although this freedom is somewhat arbitrary and capable of anything (either sin or love), its true end lies in loving action. This means that love is made possible by human freedom, according to Niebuhr. But it also means that the ultimate end of freedom is that of love. Freedom becomes love as, in the end, freedom has love as its goal. Freedom may be the ground of love, but love, within this Niebuhrian schema, is the goal of freedom.

We can therefore see that Niebuhr’s treatment of freedom and love differs somewhat from our own, as stated above. Whilst the present thesis has maintained that freedom is the ground and goal of love, Niebuhr seems to turn this equation around and assumes that love is the goal of freedom. Obviously, this reflects the distinct notions of freedom with which we are working. Niebuhr seems to understand freedom primarily as arbitrary will for either sin or love, meaning that freedom consists primarily in the act of human choice. However, the assumption of our thesis has been that human freedom is already found and determined in human potentiality. It follows that as long as one knows the potentiality of the human being, one can grasp an understanding of what constitutes its being free. This is how we could maintain that human freedom consists in humanity’s becoming what it is in Christ, a true humanity, free from the bondage of sin and free for the worship of God. We furthermore determined that the knowledge of this freedom (the knowledge of faith) was what created the ground for loving action which paved the way for the actualization of this freedom in Christ (what faith hopes for). This is not, of course, to deny the role of human choice of action. Human choice has, as we have explained, a determinate place within ethical action insofar as the human being needs to make concrete determinations within historical, material reality. But this aspect of human freedom cannot be understood to constitute the primary meaning of human freedom—because it is *human* freedom, it cannot be complete self-determination. Such complete self-determination belongs only to God.

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<sup>164</sup> Niebuhr, “Christian Faith and Natural Law,” 49–50.

But let us revisit Niebuhr's idea of *love as the goal of freedom*. This understanding is problematic to a degree because saying that love is the goal of freedom might suggest that love has the primary eschatological reference, over and above freedom. It might suggest that there will forever be brokenness that needs mending by the strivings of love. This would be contrary to any type of eschatological hope. So, it is, theologically, very improbable that love, especially in its active form, is rightly described as the end of freedom. Much rather, as we have suggested in this thesis, freedom is more rightly described to be the end of love.

Like Niebuhr, Oliver O'Donovan is concerned with showing that it is in determinations within historical, material reality that true freedom becomes actual. As O'Donovan writes: "Decision depends upon existing limits and imposes new ones. Limit is the very material with which freedom works."<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, O'Donovan's notion of love is deeply connected with these movements of freedom: "we must complete our account of Christian freedom by saying that the Spirit forms and brings to expression *the appropriate pattern of free response to objective reality*. Saint Paul designates this response in general terms as 'love' (Gal 5.6)."<sup>166</sup> Faith may be the perception of freedom and may hold priority as such but, as O'Donovan writes in *Self, World, and Time*, "the priority of faith is antecedent; it is not a primacy or pre-eminence."<sup>167</sup> O'Donovan then adds that "pre-eminence, if we follow Saint Paul, can be ascribed only to love. . . . Faith precedes love as its herald, and cannot be spoken of except in an orientation towards love, which binds us to objective reality."<sup>168</sup> Therefore, the freedom perceived in faith is materialized in the movements of love. This entails that, according to O'Donovan, freedom takes the shape of love. This may seem to rhyme somewhat with the theoretical elements of what we described to be Niebuhr's position. However, O'Donovan's treatment places greater emphasis on the aspect of love and, unlike Niebuhr, he will not be accused of downplaying its important role.

But if the relationship between love and freedom, within O'Donovan's schema, is rightly described by saying that love is the shape of freedom's self-

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<sup>165</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 108.

<sup>166</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 25. *Emphasis in the original*.

<sup>167</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time: Ethics as Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 106.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

limitations within history, then what is *the end* of freedom and love? O'Donovan's writings present strong clues as to how he would answer this question. He talks about "the eschatological dimensions of love,"<sup>169</sup> and tells his reader that "love is hopeful, carries with it a sense of incompleteness"<sup>170</sup> and that "a community of loving agreement in the truth can have existence, though fleeting and imperfect, in our midst, and can show us something of the life of heaven."<sup>171</sup> What might be implied by all this? The answer is that it might suggest that O'Donovan sees the end of love to be the perfection of love. Love is broken and will, in the end, be made perfect, meaning that perfect love is the end of love.

Yet, it is not quite that simple given that O'Donovan also very much highlights the importance of freedom in the moral life and even decisively writes that "Our supernatural end . . . is the perfect liberty of the kingdom of God."<sup>172</sup> Such decisive claims seem to suggest that O'Donovan holds that it is, in fact, freedom which is the end of love. This would agree well with the present work. But a final possibility, and not an unlikely one, for interpretation would be that O'Donovan sees freedom, eschatologically, to be coextensive with love to the degree that, while they can be conceptually pried apart, they will ultimately find a unity between themselves: that love, in the end, is freedom. As O'Donovan writes in *Self, World and Time*: "In the Kingdom of Heaven faith will not crown love and hope, but love will crown faith and hope."<sup>173</sup> Our hesitation in agreeing would be that, within O'Donovan's scheme, this unity is not primarily eschatological but, equally, completely temporal. If that would be the right reading it might suggest that loving action within historical material reality should be understood to be the actualization of freedom. But if it is not the case, we find ourselves in broad agreement with O'Donovan in seeing the future of human freedom in an eschatological unity with human love. We would still have to affirm freedom to be primarily eschatological and the active form of love to be primarily temporal. Therefore we are quite comfortable with O'Donovan's

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<sup>169</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 247.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>173</sup> O'Donovan, *Self, World, and Time*, 106.

statement when he writes that humankind's end is in "the perfect liberty of the kingdom of God."<sup>174</sup>

Now, we must seek to understand the picture of Christian action that is emerging here. Christian action is loving action or, to be more precise, it is loving service—agape. It is a type of service and action which works so that freedom may become actualized. Christian hope is that which waits for the consummation of Christ's work. Christian love is the appropriate action which correlates to the faith and the hope of the Christian. But this Christian action does not pretend to be on any level with the work of God in Christ. While agape-love strives so that God's free future may be actualized it never pretends that there is any direct correlation between its actions and that actualization. Every agape-action is a hopeful action, acted out in the faith, trust and hope that God will bring good out of evil and take our broken works of love to make them whole. One could say that agape-action seeks to open up spaces where God can act to actualize the saving work of Christ. In fact, that would help us rightly describe the distinction that ought to be drawn between human and divine action. While humankind can try to open up spaces and pave ways so that God's will might meet no hindrances or resistance, it is only God who holds the perfect freedom to really actualize his own will. Human love is, in fact, a faithful preparation of human spaces so that God's will might find no obstructions or resistance to the actualization of his saving action in Christ. Love seeks to create and sustain spaces for humankind to freely receive God and have the communion with him that God has determined for it. In our example of the Third World aid worker, that person sincerely and lovingly engaged in loving action, in the hope that spaces might be opened up so that the people of the given region might become free for faith, hope and love. At no point should this point of humility be absent although it is to be accompanied by a certain degree of strength in hope, made possible by faith and working through love. Faith, hope and love are therefore all keywords. *Faith* recognizes potentiality, *love* is work toward actualization, engaged with in the *hope* that actualization of potentiality may take place.

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<sup>174</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 163.

## ***ii. The Limits of Theological Ethics and the Risks of Love***

The picture that has now emerged of loving action must be correlated with what was established in the second chapter concerning the revealed ethic. In that chapter as a whole we were sceptical towards including any notions of natural or social orders as a part of the thought process of theological ethics. This has certain implications for the place and work of love. Towards the end of the second chapter it was noted that a distinction between theological and natural speculation should be maintained. This distinction also received expression in the possibility that this “might entail engineering of our individual and social circumstances” in that natural actualities are not to be seen as legislative of human action. However, in and of itself this could create some misunderstanding. This is not to say that individual, social or natural circumstances are not a part of the deliberation process which takes place before Christian love determines itself as a specific action. They are a part of that process! But it does mean two things: First, natural, social realities are not the source of theological ethics, of the meta-analysis that takes place concerning loving action before it is given concrete form by decision. Second, even in the concrete determination of loving action, empirical realities of nature and society have no legislative power but are always under question and can themselves be subject to change by Christian action. (This latter point is what is meant when it is said that loving action might entail “engineering of our individual and social circumstances.”)

To try to make clearer the implications of what has been said concerning love (and the revealed ethic) it could be helpful to lay out a schema of Christian action as it looks broadly from this perspective. The human being sees the truth of what God has accomplished and promised in Christ and begins engaging in actions which she hopes will be consistent with it. In faith, hope, love and humility she decides to *work so that spaces may be opened up for the actualization of God’s promise in Christ*. But, once this meta-analysis is clear, it is up to her to make determinations as to how to act concretely in any given context. In such determinations she will have to take into account empirical conditions in the natural and the social domains (although at no point do these have any ultimate legislative power over Christian action). She will eventually resolve to engage in a specific action but, in this concrete resolution, her thought is no longer theological in the strict sense. Furthermore, at this point, the

Christian cannot pretend to hold God's view of the matter but rather bears the responsibility for the action undertaken. The Christian takes up this responsibility for self-determination with the ever-strong hope that ultimately each action, whether beautiful or broken, can be redeemed by God. Human self-determination is undertaken with the hopeful knowledge that ultimately everything will be overdetermined by the grace of God. This is how we can say that loving action "could never pretend to be the actualization of God's kingdom (although it might be) but only a faithful preparing the way of the Lord, to make his paths straight."<sup>175</sup>

### ***iii. Qualifying the Distinctions***

It should be emphasized following the strong distinctions already drawn between human love and freedom in temporal existence that they are exactly that: distinctions between *human* love and freedom in our *temporal* existence. That is to say, we have described the relationship between the concepts in human, temporal existence. We have wanted to accentuate the difference between love and freedom to make an important point concerning human ethical reality wherein love and freedom are imperfect and in an imperfect relationship. They are imperfect attributes in an imperfect condition and, therefore, in an imperfect unity. This is not meant to suggest that freedom cannot be tasted or found in our present, temporal existence. Yet it does mean that the unity between the two is broken and that love's active dimension has a wider vocation in the "not yet" while freedom is, to a greater extent, an attribute describing the perfected future. Let us explain this statement further, starting with freedom in our temporal existence.

First, bear in mind that "freedom" is used here to refer to the potentiality of humankind to be in worshipful communion with God. Second, let us further analyse this concept of freedom into cognitive and active forms. In its cognitive form, humankind lives in "the already" of the Gospel. But, in temporal reality, this is achieved through faith and, importantly, faith is a gift. This means that freedom's cognitive dimension that we have in the temporal is active as faith, received as a gift, in that it is accomplished divinely.

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<sup>175</sup> See page 58.

But what then is to be said about freedom in its active form in the temporal? The answer is the same as it is for freedom in its cognitive form: It is a gift. But it is a gift that is given in love's act of striving. Even though the future of freedom, in its active form, might be found in worshipful communion, *temporal* worship remains an act of love. This is because there is a distinction between the strivings of humankind and the gift it receives in its strivings. Human love and freedom are both imperfect and in imperfect unity and this means, as has already been argued, that love and freedom do not go together except when achieved divinely. Importantly, however, as with all of love's works, through God's grace, freedom can be had and experienced in temporal worship. However, in the future of freedom, human freedom in its cognitive form will be perfected in that it will no longer walk by faith but by sight and, in its active form, it will be worshipful communion without any type of hindrance. It is therefore clear that freedom, in both its active and cognitive forms, but especially in the active forms, is *primarily* eschatological. When it manifests in the temporal domain, it is received as a gift in the strivings of love and the anticipations of hope.

As regards love, the strong distinctions made earlier are not meant to suggest that love has no vocation in redeemed reality and only a temporal dimension. If we break love into forms, as we did freedom, we could say that love has an emotive and an active form (in the current chapter we have been focused primarily on love in its active form). Love's emotive form attaches to faith in the temporal reality. It loves the truth that is held in faith. It survives in redeemed, eschatological reality as a love of that same truth which is had by sight. But what about love in its active forms? To answer that, it can be safely said that love's active forms will have little for which to strive in a reality where God's work has been fully consummated. Yet, there is one continuous work for love: the worshipful communion with God. This is because in the state of the reality of redemption, love and freedom will have a perfect, creaturely unity in the act of worship. Love strives for an ever-greater deepening of communion and is not hindered in doing so. This describes the perfect unity between acts of love and the accomplishment of freedom that has been divinely brought about. In the end, freedom, in its active form, indeed has a temporal dimension as love has an



eschatological dimension. But love's active form is primarily temporal, found in striving, as freedom's active form is primarily eschatological, received as a gift.

### **C. What Has Been Established Concerning Love**

Before we continue into the next chapter on love's relation to justice, let us draw together a short summary of what we have established concerning love. First, despite their dissimilarities, the signifier "love" can be used for both agape and eros, the Christian and the non-Christian. This "love" is a movement set in motion by the perception of potentiality which, subsequently, works in the hope that potentiality may be actualized but, importantly, without any immediate guarantees. Therefore, love, given its provisional nature, can be said to freely and imaginatively create spaces in the hope that potentiality may actualize.

With this in mind we can inquire into the nature of justice and its relation to love. While doing this we must remain mindful of our ultimate goal, which is to address the question of love's relationship to justice in the context of common political structures. But one must take the necessary steps to get there. Therefore, the next chapter will begin by looking at the general relationship between love and justice in their divine and human references. We will first examine divine love and divine justice and their interrelationship to see what might be suggested about the relationship between human love and justice.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Justice** ***-Loving Justice-***

Just as we have investigated the nature of love, so we now investigate the nature of justice in its relationship to love. This is a necessary prerequisite for us to be able eventually to investigate temporal justice in its relation to love. We will begin by considering the attributes of love and justice in reference to the divine, as God's act always corresponds with a human response which will take its shape from God's initiative. With the attributes of God we will find a perfect unity of love and justice in which love assumes logical priority. The thesis will, therefore, proceed on the instinct that love and justice will have a corresponding type of unity in reference to the human. This will be affirmed but with the important reservation that the unity of the concepts in the human realm is imperfect. Concerning justice we will find that it, like love, has a relationship to human potentiality although its way of action can be described differently to that of love, as being predominantly an act of limitation and curbing of that which threatens actualization of potentiality.

#### **A. Divine Love and Divine Justice**

God is perfectly free. In his freedom he determines himself completely without any hindrance or frustration to his will and God has determined himself as the one who loves. He seeks fellowship with humankind, to lead humankind into communion with himself and this reveals his love. But as God seeks to bring humankind into freedom in communion with himself he also has determined and revealed himself as just. He is just, in that the communion between himself and humankind will be restored only by the destruction of that which is in opposition to His holiness. This can be seen in the cross of Christ. On the cross, humankind's sin against God's great majesty and holiness is defeated and destroyed. The cross assuredly represents to us the justice of God, which brings defeat and destruction to that which pretends to set itself in opposition to His will. At the same time, the decision of God in Christ to undergo, according to his human nature, the suffering of the cross, reveals his love. In this

way, one cannot fully treat the topic of God's love in history without the treating of his justice as one cannot fully treat of his justice without his love. On the issue of the unity and distinction of divine attributes Karl Barth rightly writes:

The multiplicity, individuality and diversity of the perfections of God are those of His simple being, which is not therefore divided and then put together again. In God multiplicity, individuality and diversity do not stand in any contradiction to unity. Rather the very unity of His being consists in the multiplicity, individuality and diversity of His perfections. . . . Our doctrine therefore means that every individual perfection in God is nothing but God Himself and therefore nothing but every other divine perfection. It means equally strictly on the other hand that God Himself is nothing other than each one of His perfections in its individuality, and that each individual perfection is identical with every other and with the fulness of them all.<sup>176</sup>

Here it is important that love appears as an especially defining or spearheading attribute of God in Barth's theology. This is the case because all of God's other purposes are willed in his self-determination as the one who loves. As Barth writes:

God's loving is an end in itself. All the purposes that are willed and achieved in Him are contained and explained in this end, and therefore in this loving in itself and as such. For this loving is itself the blessing that it communicates to the loved, and it is its own ground as against the loved. Certainly in loving us God wills His own glory and our salvation. But He does not love us because He wills this. He wills it for the sake of His love. God loves in realising these purposes. But God loves because He loves; because this act is His being, His essence and His nature. He loves without and before realising these purposes. He loves to eternity. Even in realising them, He loves because He loves. And the point of this realisation is not grounded in itself, but in His love as such, in the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And as we believe in God, and return His love, it is not to be understood from itself, but only from His loving as such.<sup>177</sup>

In this way the conception of God as free and self-determining, as the one who loves in this self-determination, is the entry point through which Barth wants to access the other perfections of God. He does not do this to challenge the unity of the attributes in God but rather to access them in a way that is exegetically sound. Barth writes the following:

The one perfection of God, His loving in freedom, is lived out by Him, and therefore identical with a multitude of various and distinct types of perfection. There is no possibility of knowing the perfect God without knowing His perfections. The converse is also true: knowledge of the divine

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<sup>176</sup> Barth, *CD* II/1:333–34.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

perfections is possible only in knowledge of the perfect God, of His loving in freedom. . . . The real God is the one God who loves in freedom, and as such is eternally rich. To know Him means to know Him again and again, in ever new ways—to know only Him, but to know Him as the perfect God, in the abundance, distinctness and variety of His perfections.<sup>178</sup>

But there are other ways of construing the thesis of the unity of the divine attributes such as love and justice. Consider the *Summa Contra Gentiles* by Thomas Aquinas. The thesis put forward by Aquinas might at first appear in all major aspects to be like that now introduced by the present thesis, which aligns with Barth's as well. This appears so because Aquinas argues for the unity of divine attributes in God's self and employs the categories of potentiality and actuality. Nonetheless, Aquinas's argument differs from ours. Furthermore, Aquinas's argument also takes a slightly different shape because of the way in which he conceives of the relationship between Creator and creature.

Thomas Aquinas, while arguing for the unity of attributes, and employing the categories of potentiality and actuality, proceeds by way of negative theology. That is, Aquinas understands God as transcending the forms of our intellect in a way that makes it necessary to proceed by first establishing what God is not. As Aquinas writes, "For the divine substance, by its immensity, transcends every form that our intellect can realize; and thus we cannot apprehend it by knowing what it is, but we have some sort of knowledge of it by knowing what it is not."<sup>179</sup> In this spirit, Aquinas adds: "Everything that has in its substance an admixture of potentiality, to the extent that it has potentiality is liable not to be: because what can be, can also not be. But God in Himself cannot not be, seeing that He is everlasting; therefore there is in God no potentiality."<sup>180</sup>

To some this might seem strange, insofar as potentiality is generally what a thing is before it is actuality. But Aquinas argues that this cannot be the case with

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>179</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation of Summa Contra Gentiles*, transl. Joseph Rickaby (1950; repr. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2006), 13 (Book I, XIV).

<sup>180</sup> Aquinas, *Of God and His Creatures*, 14 (Book I, XVI). But if it is true, as Aquinas states, that God is pure actuality, how can Christ, the second person of the Trinity, be said to be potentiality? Would it not be a contradiction? At this point it must be brought to memory that Christ has taken on human nature as Jesus Christ, meaning that Christ is affirmed to be both fully human as well as fully divine. So, when we describe Jesus Christ as being the potentiality of creation, what is being referred to is Jesus Christ, according to his resurrected human nature. In his resurrected human nature Jesus Christ represents the goal of all creation transformed.

God, who is not a thing among things and therefore does not exist as other things exist. Rather, God is the great cause of all things. “Because potentiality does not bring itself into actuality, but is brought into actuality by something which is already in actuality. Everything therefore that is any way in potentiality has something else prior to it. But God is the First Being and the First Cause, and therefore has not in Himself any admixture of potentiality.”<sup>181</sup>

That God is, in this way, pure actuality entails, according to Aquinas’s argument, that God is one, and in that respect, unlike everything else that must be composite:

In every compound there must be actuality and potentiality. For a plurality of things cannot become one thing, unless there be actuality and potentiality. For things that are not one absolutely, are not actually united except by being in a manner tied up together or driven together: in which case the parts thus got together are in potentiality in respect of union; for they combine actually, after having been potentially combinable. But in God there is no potentiality: therefore there is not in Him any composition.<sup>182</sup>

It can therefore be said that God is one, a perfect actuality and the cause of all things. The effects he has created and produced have a trace of himself in them, enough that Aquinas feels confident to say that human beings can arrive at God through the effects which he produces, “for as we cannot know Him naturally otherwise than by arriving at Him from the effects which He produces, the names whereby we denote His perfections must be several and diverse, answering to the diverse perfections that are found in things.”<sup>183</sup> In this way God’s perfections are known by looking towards the perfections found in the things which are his creation and effect. Therefore, in a sense, one should go further than just applying the word “trace” when discussing how Aquinas sees God’s attributes reflected in his creation. Aquinas goes so far as to say of God’s effects that their attributes share in God’s attributes through a type of “imperfect participation.” Aquinas writes that “that which is found to perfection in God is found in other beings by some manner of imperfect participation, the said point of likeness belongs to God absolutely, but not so to the creature.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 15 (Book I, XVI).

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 15 (Book I, XVIII).

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 24 (Book I, XXXI).

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 23 (Book I, XXIX).

Therefore, according to Aquinas, as we proceed to speak of God with reference to his creation, we must proceed by way of analogy and by way of negative theology, which proceeds carefully to exclude those things which God is not so as to draw closer to describing him by his attributes. It remains true that in describing God's attributes, according to Aquinas, we must move largely by observing the attributes of his creation and these attributes are diverse and as manifold as creation. However, because God is not a composite of actuality and potentiality but is *pure* actuality, of a single essence, the conclusion must be, according to Aquinas, that if we could see and understand his essence clearly we could see their perfect unity and be able to refer to them all by a single name:

Thus also God by His one simple being possesses all manner of perfection, all that other beings compass by divers faculties—yea, much more. Hereby the need is clear of many names predicated of God: for as we cannot know Him naturally otherwise than by arriving at Him from the effects which He produces, the names whereby we denote His perfections must be several and diverse, answering to the diverse perfections that are found in things. But if we could understand His essence as it is in itself, and adapt to it a name proper to it, we should express it by one name only, as is promised to those who shall behold Him in essence: *In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name shall be one* (Zach. xiv, 9).<sup>185</sup>

So, God is one and his attributes, if we could clearly see them and understand them, are one and undivided in his essence. The present thesis accepts such a pronouncement, for the most part. Nonetheless, it should simultaneously be clear that Aquinas's thought does not place special emphasis on God's love as the determining factor of the manifestation of this unity. There is, furthermore, an important difference in methods and assumptions used in Aquinas's argumentation. We are somewhat hesitant to follow the view that humankind shares in the nature of God through some form of participation of the attributes of things in the created order. It is not we are reluctant to make the conceptual distinction between the attributes while yet affirming their unity. That is one practical implication of Aquinas's understanding, allowing us to say that the attributes are so diverse in creation that it is possible for us to distinguish between them in reference to the divine essence, while affirming that, ultimately, they inhere in unity. Rather, the problem is that Aquinas's pronouncements regarding these issues come pre-packaged with this

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 24 (Book I, XXXI).

notion of divine emanation in nature and a type of theological argument based on that, both of which conflict with earlier commitments made in the present thesis.

### ***i. The Unity of Virtues and the Logical Priority of Love***

But with all this repeated affirmation of ultimate unity, whether it comes from Barth or from Aquinas, it could easily be forgotten that it could be most sensible to talk about either God's justice or God's love, depending on the event in salvation history to which one refers. In other words, God's justice should perhaps be seen to be manifested in the crucifixion specifically and God's love is seen to be manifested in the resurrection. Similarly, the Old Testament, with its emphasis on laws and commands, could be associated more directly with justice in contrast with the New Testament revelation which arguably imparts a message primarily of love. In such a way, could it not be argued that God's love and justice are manifested separately and at different times in salvation history? So, even though, ultimately, they reach fulfilment in each other, should we not describe them to be manifested separately in history?

It will be admitted that, if the cross appears to us to be primarily an act of justice because it is an act of destruction, we can understand that. Justice, while belonging in a unity with love, is conceptually distinguished in that it primarily destroys and limits opposition to God's will, for example in restoring communion between himself and humankind. This remains true and is likely what tempts us to identify an event such as the cross solely with justice insofar as the destruction of sin is among its pronounced dimensions. However, it would be one-sided to leave it at that, because it also remains true that the cross, as has been stated, reveals God's love as it does God's justice. The justice of God cannot be treated without holding God's love in view. They inhere together. When God in Christ seeks to restore communion between himself and humankind and undergoes the way of the cross to this end, this reveals his love. The limiting destructive aspect of the cross is, therefore, revealing of God's love just as it is revealing of his justice. Similarly, although the resurrection might be viewed as a point of affirmation for humankind and, therefore, as pointing towards love, it also presents humankind with a promise that functions as a judgment on those realities which are "not yet" aligned with the resurrection. Therefore, justice

is always fully in view also in the resurrection. In making our distinctions and pronouncements with respect to God's actions we gradually discover the way in which our pronouncement of God as just leads us to his love and pronouncements of his love leads us to his justice.

Having said this, that there is a unity in which God's love always has his justice in view and vice versa, it also must remain true that love takes a certain priority in the relationship between the two. In an important way, while holding the unity of the concepts in view, it is a unity in which love should be seen to hold priority. After all, the story of the Scriptures is that of God who, in his freedom, seeks to bring humankind into communion with himself, and thereby, in his freedom, determine himself lovingly.<sup>186</sup> God's entire mission, as revealed in the Scriptures, is in loving and restoring humankind to communion with himself.

To better illustrate this let us take the case of divine lawgiving as found in the Decalogue, a paradigmatic example of God, in his justice, commanding justice to his people. The commandments in the Decalogue can be said to consist of two tables. The first table of the Decalogue refers to humankind's worship of and communion with God (humankind's potentiality), and is found in the first four commandments ("You shall have no other gods before me," "You shall not make for yourself an idol," "Do not take the name of the Lord in vain," "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy" (Exod 20.3-8)). The first table has therefore to do with humankind with respect to an explicitly "vertical" dimension, as worshiping beings who belong in communion with their Creator. Therefore, the first table refers directly to that which God seeks, loving communion between God and humankind. The second table refers to human responsibilities, as it were on a "horizontal level," referring especially to life together with other human beings in the "not-yet" (honor your father and mother," "You shall not kill," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour" (Exod 20.9-17).

How then does the second table of the Decalogue relate to God's mission of love to restore humankind into loving communion with himself? As Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: "The Decalogue indeed demands respect for the right to life, marriage, property, and human honor in the name of God. However, this does not

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<sup>186</sup> Barth, *CD* II,1: 258–321.



mean that these orders, codified into law, would have an absolute divine value as such, but merely that in them and above them God alone seeks to be honored and worshiped.”<sup>187</sup> That is to say, God seeks loving communion with humankind and the law he lays down in the Decalogue circumscribes spheres within which worshipful communion with God can be cultivated. That is to say, even when God might appear to be manifesting his justice singularly, in setting down laws of conduct, love appears as its reference and inner logic. In this we discover that even the accentuated legalistic notion in the Old Testament Scriptures, so easily associated with justice, reveal themselves to be in unity with love and to have their centre in God’s loving mission to restore communion between himself and humankind. This is not said to nullify the differences that are to be found between the emphasis in the Old Testament scriptures and the scriptures of the New Testament. It is said to show how God’s love and justice always travel together, and that, in this unity, love takes a certain priority.

Nonetheless, a fair argument could be made that, in the writings of the prophet Hosea, God in fact seems torn between the options of love and justice as he plans his interactions with his people. In Hosea we find many words describing the punishment God will distribute to Israel because of its waywardness. “Destruction to them because they have rebelled against me!” are the words attributed to God in Hosea 7.13. As God’s justice opposes, breaks down and destroys that which hinders his communion with his people, so it could seem that much of the writing in Hosea might suggest that God intends punishment or destruction for the Israelites for having turned away from loving communion with God. Yet, at the same time, we also find God saying in the book of Hosea: “I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger will turn away from them” (Hos 14.4). How can the two texts be understood in the same book of Hosea as utterances attributed to God? One way of understanding this could be found in an interpretation of the text which might call into question the contention we have already made concerning God’s love and justice as unitary. The interpretation would take Hosea as an example that God is, in fact, torn between love and justice and chooses one over the other in every given moment in salvation history. Sequentially, the two will eventually be brought into

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<sup>187</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 6, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West, and Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 358.

perfect unity with the completion of salvation history in the eschaton. But until that time God is choosing to express either justice or love, as (it would be argued) is seen in the book of Hosea.

But is the book of Hosea rightly understood as manifesting an alternate idea of the relationship between God's love and God's justice? Does Hosea actually present God as being torn between love and justice and then choosing one over the other? Actually and primarily, the text must be seen to show the great fidelity and love of God, seeking the restoration of communion with his people.<sup>188</sup> Furthermore, the text reveals God's justice as instrumental in bringing about the repentance, forgiveness and restoration that re-establishes loving communion between God and his people. In other words, justice and love appear in a unity in Hosea. Hosea functions to remind the people of Israel and Judah that turning away has its consequences which are quite dire. In fact, the greater part of the text concerns itself with the results of the unfaithfulness of God's people if they do not turn to him and repent for their idolatry. There is abundant description of the results of the waywardness of God's people, of the punishment that they will reap. Nonetheless, the text also reveals the faithfulness of God's love which will, in the end, be triumphant, bringing his people back to wholesomeness, into loving communion with God.

There is general agreement that the story of Hosea's marriage to Gomer in the beginning of the book of Hosea functions as a metaphor for the prophetic message that follows.<sup>189</sup> In that metaphor, Hosea married an unfaithful woman, Gomer. As it is written in Hosea: "Go, take yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord" (Hosea 1.2). What follows in chapter 2 is a rebuke and chastisement of adultery which bears a strong resemblance to the idolatry and turning away of Israel. Nevertheless, in chapter 3, after the chastisement, God gives Hosea the following instructions: "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress." The analogy is clear, just as Hosea is faithful to his unfaithful wife so God is faithful to Israel and whatever chastisement follows from the infidelity serves only to bring her/them back to a more wholesome communion.

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<sup>188</sup> James Limburg, *Hosea-Micah*, Interpretation-series (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1998), 52–53.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 1–2.

Making the analogy ever more explicit, the text reads “Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes” (Hos 3.1).

When God rebukes his people and gives them up to waywardness and punishes the unrepentant this only serves his loving purpose, which seeks a wholesome, free communion with his people. His justice never travels alone, without his love, and his love always ensures that his justice overcomes that which sets itself in opposition to his loving will. Again it is affirmed that love and justice coexist in a unity. Even when justice might appear to be moving without love and love without justice, they are shown to be in unity. Importantly, it is again affirmed that this unity is secured in the logical primacy of love. This is what results from our reading of Hosea. At every turn it becomes clear that God’s attributes are in a unity; his holiness and his justice, his freedom and his love, his love and his justice, and so forth. As Karl Barth writes:

Every individual trait which is to be affirmed of God can signify only the one, but the one which is to be affirmed of Him must of necessity signify also every individual trait and the totality of all individual traits. Every distinction in God can be affirmed only in such a way as implies at the same time His unity and therefore the lack of essential discrepancy in what is distinguished.<sup>190</sup>

However, as should have become clear, the emphasis on unity cannot be left to stand without further qualification. This is why Barth rightly reminds us that, primarily, “God’s being consists in the fact that He is the One who loves in freedom.”<sup>191</sup> God’s free love appears as an access point to the other perfections, giving his love a certain priority in thought and discussion. Barth continues:

The one perfection of God, His loving in freedom, is lived out by Him, and therefore identical with a multitude of various and distinct types of perfection. There is no possibility of knowing the perfect God without knowing His perfections. The converse is also true: knowledge of the divine perfections is possible only in knowledge of the perfect God, of His loving in freedom.<sup>192</sup>

Therefore, any idea of God tempering his justice with mercy or of his mercy being limited by his justice is untenable. That would suggest that his attributes limit each other so that God is not allowed to express either fully in the context of the other.

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<sup>190</sup> Barth, *CD* II/1:332.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

God's love and justice can be conceptually pulled apart for discussion, but, ultimately, God's love and God's justice are two sides of the same coin, which we can call God's *loving justice*.

## **B. Human Love and Human Justice**

What has now been said about God's love and justice might leave us with important clues as to how we should understand the nature of human love and human justice. If God's love and God's justice are to be thought of in unity as loving justice, this might bear in some way on how the relationship between human love and human justice is conceived. After all, humankind is called to correspond to God's act. God loves and so humankind should respond in love. God acts justly and humankind responds. It must be acknowledged that there is an element of such "mirroring" or correspondence in action. But it should equally be clear that such mirroring, or response, is not made by an equal. It is a thoroughly creaturely response to a divine initiative. That much should be clear. The question is what that implies for the unity of love and justice in the realm of the human.

While it is true that there surely is a correspondence between the acts of God and the acts of humankind, there is, yet, one important difference: the perfect unity of the attributes of God. In his being he is perfectly free and perfectly wise; he is at the same time perfectly loving and perfectly just. This perfect unity does not belong to humankind. With humankind one discovers the imperfect unity of the attributes in imperfect, human, freedom and wisdom.<sup>193</sup> Humankind does not, as has been discussed above, have the perfect freedom that directly accomplishes what it hopes for. What this entails, as we have seen in the chapter on love, is that love does not create or accomplish the new reality it strives for directly but, rather, acts in a creative hope that its actions will be made perfect by the divine act. Likewise, the justice that is human does not directly achieve destruction of that which is in

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<sup>193</sup> It might seem strange to make so much of the imperfection of the attributes of human freedom and human wisdom in a discussion about human love and justice. But we do this only because it helps us highlight the implications of the imperfect unity of imperfect virtues in human love and human justice. The imperfection of human wisdom helps us explain the confusion in human judgment concerning love and justice and their resulting imperfect relationship in the judgment that precedes action. Furthermore, the imperfection of human freedom helps us make clear how the execution of the act, once judgment is in place, can be frustrated and have unintended consequences.

opposition to God's will but is, rather, only an attempted limitation, curbing or restricting the manifestations of rebelling reality insofar it is (humanly) deemed to be destructive of love. So it is that human justice, like human love, has a reference to human potentiality/freedom of creaturely communion with God and the actualization of that potentiality.

Therefore, the unity between human love and justice is imperfect insofar as acts of love can, with incorrect judgment (imperfect human wisdom) or failed execution (imperfect human freedom) have disastrous effects on that which justice would want to shield. Furthermore, acts of justice, human attempts to curb rebelling realities, can possibly be to the detriment of love insofar as human judgment/wisdom suffers from an imperfection that can have catastrophic effects. Human love and human justice, therefore, coexist in an imperfect unity. They serve each other, and cannot be viewed in complete isolation, but yet are not in perfect harmony. This is true whether one looks to their cognitive, emotive or active forms. As we ask whether human love and human justice should not be said to correspond to or mirror the divine unity of love and justice, our answer must be a "Yes." They are, as they both refer to the actualization of potentiality. They can be said to go together to the extent that they can be named together as loving justice. But this "Yes" must be combined with a "No" because they are, after all, still a *human* love and a *human* justice in an *imperfect* state and, therefore, in an imperfect unity wherein they can frustrate each other in both judgment and act. As Oliver O'Donovan rightly writes: "The clemency of human judgment cannot be like divine mercy, making all things new; it can only be a response to it, founded in humility, gratitude and fellow-feeling with sinners. It can only point, it cannot reach, to the place where justice and mercy are entirely one."<sup>194</sup>

Similarly, when Reinhold Niebuhr talks about perfect and imperfect expressions of justice his arguments strongly resemble what has been argued here. Within the Niebuhrian scheme of things, when love enters into historical realities, it is compromised by the reality that it enters.<sup>195</sup> Therefore, love becomes *imperfect* love in historical realities and inspires customs and structures of justice that can be termed *imperfect* justice. This imperfect justice is then constantly being perfected by

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<sup>194</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 260.

<sup>195</sup> Niebuhr, "The Ethic of Jesus and the Social Problem," 35.

the activities of love up to the point of becoming perfect justice.<sup>196</sup> As Niebuhr writes: “. . . anything short of love cannot be perfect justice.”<sup>197</sup> This eventual identity between love and justice is a testament to the ultimate unity of love and justice within the Niebuhrian conceptual frame. Nonetheless, it remains true for Niebuhr that, within temporal reality, love and justice are differentiated and love guides their movements. This stance works well as a general description of things and accords largely with what has been stated here: that justice and love can be differentiated in human activity although they ultimately coexist in a unity. However, for Niebuhr, the emphasis is always largely on the moral situation (corrupt institutions, the reality of differing interests, the fact of human egoism, etc.) rather than on the imperfection of human wisdom and freedom.

Given that this is the case, Niebuhr is more confident that human judgment and freedom can find and achieve the best decision given any situation, although it may fall far from the highest ideal of love. However, it must remain true that, more fundamentally, the problem is that we do not necessarily know what entails a good compromise and even if we did our chosen route of action might be frustrated by events we cannot control. So, the question and problem revolves not primarily around reality and compromise, as it does for Niebuhr (although these will be important factors for subsequent human judgment and action), but prior to this there is a more basic uncertainty concerning human judgment and human action.

Let us further explain this unity of and difference between human love and human justice. The unity between human love and human justice is found on two levels which are both intimately connected. First, their unity is found in their being a response to and in correspondence with God's acts of love and justice, which coexist in a unity. Secondly, their unity is found in that they both refer to the actualization of potentiality. Their differentiation and complementarity should be described in the following way: Human love is a human response to God's love, which seeks the actualization of the potentiality of humankind to be in free communion with God. It is, therefore, a creative enterprise that proactively ventures and risks, builds and

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<sup>196</sup> Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 2, 252. See also Niebuhr, “The Ethic of Jesus and the Social Problem,” 32.

<sup>197</sup> Niebuhr, “Christian Faith and Natural Law,” 49.

creates in the hope that the actions may correlate to God's initiative and contribute to the actualization of potentiality.

Human justice is a response to God's act of judgment and destruction of all which pretends to set itself in opposition to his holiness and will. It, therefore, seeks to curb, hinder and limit that which threatens the accomplishments of love. Both refer to the actualization of potentiality. But, more than love, justice refers to that which is actual while love is more singularly oriented toward potentiality. This is not to say that love does not include justice's concern for the actual or that justice does not have a strong focus upon potentiality.

As human attributes, justice and love coexist in an imperfect unity with the effect that they can find themselves in opposition, or fall into a quandary. They can, because of the human condition of broken, imperfect unity, frustrate each other, in both human judgment and in action. In a single scenario of events, one act may be considered just and another loving. In that occurrence the agent will have to make one determination over the other, by way of judgment, and then follow through, in the freedom and the risk that come with it. A very clear illustrative case would be the medical treatment of people resisting necessary treatment. The treatment suggested may be resisted or rejected and, yet, the caregiver may nonetheless determine to force it upon the recipient as an act of love. Very possibly, our judgments, theological or non-theological, will tend to see the act of forcing someone to do something against her will to be an unjust act. Yet, we may undertake it. And it may be true the other way around. We may make a judgment and a determination to respect the autonomy and space of the individual that rejects our treatment, respecting our established thought trajectories concerning justice while going against what we perceive to be the loving act to undertake in that situation.

We mention this to underline that, although love and justice go together and have the same reference in acting, we will often be uncertain as to when they go together. That is to say, people will find themselves in a perceived quandary between love and justice and yet proceed to act. Another excellent example would be a case with an even more conspicuous public dimension. A landlord who turned a deserving tenant out of his home in order to make it available to a son or daughter as an art studio might plausibly be thought to act both lovingly (to his son or daughter) and

unjustly (to the tenant). Again, it happens that there seems to be a tug of war between love and justice in our judgments.

In this it must be emphasized that these divergences are only apparent. One may certainly feel and experience being torn in the situation of parenting between being a hard disciplinarian or a kind, supportive parent. But, in the end, there is a way for every situation in which our actions are simultaneously the best discipline and the kindest support. The problem is that we are without perfect knowledge and perfect freedom of execution.

Nevertheless, perhaps we have not, by stating this, fully excluded the possibility of real divergences that are more than apparent. Could there be, for example, a wider and more benign sense in which we must say that human beings experience the differentiation of the virtues? That is, is there a sense in which the virtues are self-standing and without conflict? When, for example, a man makes his living as a football manager during the working week and volunteers for a kids-with-cancer-charity during the weekends is he not exhibiting two kinds of virtues, self-standing and without conflict? Is he not demonstrating in the first instance the virtue of being a good manager and, in the second instance, the virtue of love? And if he, furthermore, is without excess in food or drink, does this not show him to have a third virtue, that of temperance, quite independent of the others?

The truth is that there is a love which has brought this particular man to become a football manager. Whether it is his love of his local community, his country, money, fame, or the game of football, love has brought him to this profession and shapes it. The virtue of being a good football manager is determined by the virtue of love. Every man has a supreme love which imposes its distinctive shape on everything that he does. The love which ascends to the object of love subsequently descends in its service and engages in actions that correspond and serve that object of love. In this descent, in this action on behalf of the beloved (the ego, the country, money, another person, God's promise, etc.) justice is determined and defined as it appears in the face of opposition to love. In this way, what is considered just will receive a determination from our loves. This is how love appears in a unity with justice within which love holds logical primacy. Concerning the man's volunteer work for a kids-with-cancer-charity, this can very well be in the service of



the same love which guides the man in his pursuits as a football manager: love of ego, local community, fame, God, and so on. It may also be a different love altogether. However that may be, a multitude of loves will, in the end, inhere together in a hierarchy of loves, where there is an ultimate love that determines and shapes all other loves. Concerning other virtues, such as temperance, they are never self-standing but always stand in reference to and the service of something else. There is no sense in which love and justice serve temperance or bravery or other such virtues. But there is more obviously a sense in which temperance and bravery are put to the service of love and justice.

Now there is yet another category of virtue that is somewhat different from the ones already mentioned. Being a good football manager requires a virtue, just as being a good driver is a virtue, at least in some sense. The same goes for piano playing, which requires the perfection of skill. But the sense in which they are virtues is quite different and they could almost be described more accurately as arts or functions. As such they are super-ordered by the higher virtues, first love and justice and second temperance and bravery and industry and so on.

Oliver O'Donovan also argues for a mutual inhering of the attributes through the concept of love. As he writes: "true virtue is love for God, and the four cardinal virtues are manifestations of this love in certain typical relations into which human existence leads us. Temperance is the loving subject preserving himself unspoilt for God; fortitude is his glad endurance of all for God's sake; justice is his stance of subordination before God and command over the non-human creation; and prudence is his discrimination between that which helps and that which hinders his pilgrimage towards God."<sup>198</sup> This is largely in line with what is being argued here, although the present work has argued that the function of justice is more fundamentally in connection with love and has described its workings as differing somewhat from the description provided by O'Donovan. Human justice seeks to secure that which corresponds to the future love is seeking to achieve or realize. It thereby refers to the same process of the actualization of potentiality but is active in placing limits, hindering and curbing that which threatens the accomplishments of love.

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<sup>198</sup> O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*, 223.

Therefore, we again affirm that the virtues are never completely differentiated or self-standing, although we do, for practical reasons, refer to this or that act as loving, the next act as just, the third act as brave and the fourth act as an example of good driving. We do the same when we read the Scriptures and attribute the concept of justice to the cross of Christ, when in fact the attribute of justice is not alone and self-standing in that event. The difference is that, in human action, wisdom and freedom are imperfect, making an actual disjunction between love and justice in thought and action possible.

### ***i. Platonic Unity and Conflict of Virtues***

The Platonic construal of the unity of virtues, like that proposed here, understands the conflict of virtue as arising only with defective virtue. In this regard, as will be explained, Plato emphasizes the failure of the attribute of human wisdom as the cause of this conflict. The Platonic construal of the virtues does affirm a unity between them, but it is a somewhat different unity from the one espoused here. Although it can be said that there is development to be found in Plato's thought on the virtues over the course of his writing, it can be safely stated that Plato consistently presents the virtues as unitary in some way. In the early Socratic dialogues we find Socrates affirming the unity of virtues as, for example, in *Protagoras* where the eventual claim is that all virtues are united in wisdom. In this way, the conclusion in *Protagoras* is that even bravery is one with the other virtues as it ultimately depends on wisdom to be recognized as true bravery and not just foolhardiness.<sup>199</sup> Based on this type of reasoning Socrates is able to conclude that men cannot be "altogether ignorant, but also very courageous."<sup>200</sup> The result must be that a conflict is possible only between defective virtues that have their root in defective or incomplete wisdom.

In the *Republic* the angle is somewhat different but not necessarily opposed or in discontinuity with that of the unity of virtues in wisdom we find in *Protagoras*. Rather, it could be said to add a part to the picture that emerged in *Protagoras*. In the

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<sup>199</sup> As Socrates is found saying toward the end of the dialogue: "I said 'that the opposite of cowardice is courage.' . . . Now wisdom about what is to be feared and what isn't is the opposite of error about that. . . . And error about that is cowardice." Plato, *Protagoras*, 359a–362d.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 360b–e.

*Republic* the virtues, like all other phenomena, have a further, ultimate unity in the Form of the Good. Plato's Socrates, in conversation with Glaucon, draws an analogy between the Form of the Good and the sun. He describes the sun as that which grants the light by which our eyes are able to see. The analogy between the sun and the Form of the Good is that, as the sun grants the light which makes it possible for our eyes to see so the Form of the Good has a similar function for our intellects:

Then what gives the objects of knowledge their truth and the mind the power of knowing is the Form of the Good. . . . And just as it was right to think of light and sight as being like the sun, but wrong to think of them as being the sun itself, so here again it is right to think of knowledge and truth as being like the Good, but wrong to think of either of them as being the Good, which must be given as still higher place of honour.<sup>201</sup>

Afterwards a general discussion takes place between Socrates and Glaucon concerning how this Form of the Good may be better known and this discussion runs in the direction that the Form of the Good is to be known through the intellect. However, and importantly, no precise methods for achieving knowledge of the Form of the Good are presented.

What can be safely said is that, in both *Protagoras* and the *Republic*, it is the virtue of reason/wisdom that receives a special place of prominence. Then, in the *Republic*, there appears a further unity, the Form of the Good, the unity of all good things. It is this good the intellect seeks so as to receive the kind of knowledge which might make humankind truly virtuous. All the virtues/attributes find their unity in the Form of the Good and this is what the human intellect seeks to know. But if we were to agree that this was in fact the nature of the unity of the virtues, whether of love, justice, bravery or chastity, these considerations still leave a looming question: What is this Form of the Good? Or better: What is the Form of the Good a form of? Terry Penner has maintained that the two major responses have been to describe the Good as either a moral good or some quasi-moral good. But Penner has a problem with the over-moralization of the notion of the Good, arguing that such moralistic interpretations do not describe the Form of the Good as "a Platonic Form of the kind of individual good we discover in Socrates (at least on some views), namely, the

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<sup>201</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 508–500.

happiness of the individual.”<sup>202</sup> Penner maintains that this implausible view of the Form of the Good has been seen to be plausible because there is no proper alternative explanation. This is why Penner argues that the Form of the Good should be seen to be advantage or benefit. Chasing the central place of wisdom in Plato, Penner reminds us that:

In the *Republic*, Plato tells us that Wisdom is the science the rational part has of advantage or benefit (tou sumpherontos) to each of the three parts of the soul and to the whole these parts constitute. So what is advantage or benefit? If we turn to the characterization of wisdom in the city, we find that the wisdom involved is: the science (epistêmê) . . . by means of which one does not deliberate about some particular thing as the science of carpentry deliberates about how wooden things should be in the best state (echoi beltista); or the sciences of bronzesmithing and of farming about how bronzes or crops should do best; but about the whole—how the whole city gets along best (arista homiloi), with itself and with other cities.<sup>203</sup>

Based on this, Penner states that “I take it to be clear that good and advantage are here taken to be the same thing.”<sup>204</sup> Penner concludes: “And what could the Form of the Good clarify if not what that good, i.e., advantage is which it is Reason’s function (a) to have the science of and (b) to seek to realize in deliberating and in ruling the other two parts of the soul?” As we asked before what the Form of the Good was a form of, it seems that Penner has advanced a convincing argument that not only maintains a steady continuity between the earlier Socratic dialogues, such as *Protagoras*, and its emphasis on happiness, the unity of virtue and the part that knowledge or intellect plays in this unity. Furthermore, it also seems to accord well with the *Republic*.

So, we have a unity of the virtues in the Form of the Good that is the benefit or advantage of the whole. This Good is then to be known by reason/wisdom. This being the case, the *Protagoras* argument is largely affirmed by the *Republic* insofar as the virtues do coexist in a unity that depends on human wisdom to be known and enacted. This entails that there is a conflict between virtues only if there is defect in the virtues which, again, is always traceable to a defect in human wisdom. It so

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<sup>202</sup> Terry Penner, “What is the Form of the Good a Form of? A Question about the Plot of the *Republic*,” in *Pursuing the Good: Ethics and Metaphysics in Plato’s Republic*, ed. Douglas Cairns, Fritz-Gregor Hermann and Terry Penner (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 24.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

happens that this line of reasoning largely aligns with a part of what we have argued, that is to say that imperfect human wisdom contributes to seeming contradictions between the attributes of love and justice.

There is, however, a rather large problem that the Platonist, who would be pleased with the idea that the Form of the Good is the ultimate unity and depends on wisdom for actualization. The problem is that Plato never achieves knowledge of this Good, at least not in his written legacy. As Penner confirms: “But Plato does not claim to have knowledge of the Form of the Good, and therefore would not claim to have knowledge of the good—any more than Socrates claimed to have knowledge of the good.”<sup>205</sup> But, if this is the case, then what is left for the Platonic subject but trying, by an effort of the logical rational mind, to derive statements that by themselves give us knowledge of the Form of the Good and consistently end up in *aporia*, in confusion and the inability to derive statements that grant us the kind of knowledge Plato was seeking? And, given the dependency of virtue on wisdom, where does this leave the possibility and viability of virtue?

It must be said that we are able agree to some extent with the general structure of the Platonic description of the unity of the virtues, apprehended by intellect as it turns toward the Form of the Good. However, what we also see, perhaps not surprisingly given that this is a theological thesis, is that the intellectual seeing and knowing that Plato seeks is possible only from the position of faith. From the position of faith we can see that benefit or advantage is in communion with God. We can, therefore, in the position of faith, speak into Plato’s framework and say: If the form of the Good is taken on faith, then the form of the Good is communion with God, and love names the virtue of seeking this and all the virtues are united in this love and the justice that is unitary and yet subordinate to it.

It is, however, at this point that the discussion turns to love and justice, and here we find another, important, point of disagreement with the Platonic framework of the unity of virtues. In looking to the accounts of love in Plato’s writings the chief feature that emerges is a yearning or desire, a primarily emotive quality. In the *Phaedrus* the wildness of the emotive qualities of love is highlighted prominently, making it imperative for it to be led, or shaped by, reason and self-control. Or, to use

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 36.

the analogy of the *Phaedrus*, the charioteer, the love of wisdom, must rule the two horses, the white horse (love of honor and propriety) and the black horse (love of pleasures) so as to steer the right course. When the soul is rightly ordered in this way then “all love is directed, by its nature, toward the good.”<sup>206</sup>

However, a more coherent idea of love emerges in the *Symposium*, which finds a true home with Plato’s constellation of the Form of the Good, wisdom and justice. In the *Symposium* Socrates argues (or, rather, relays the argument of Diotima) that love is that which seeks the attainment of absolute good.<sup>207</sup> But love seeks that which it needs and, therefore, does not have. According to Socrates “Love is the love of something which he hasn’t got, and consequently lacks.” Furthermore, “if love is lacking in what is beautiful, and if the good and the beautiful are the same, he must also be lacking in what is good.”<sup>208</sup> Love therefore appears as an ascending, largely emotive or appetitive trait, seeking the glimpse of the eternal goodness, truth and beauty. Love is, within the Platonic scheme, basically driven by the emptiness of that which it seeks.

This is problematic for the present work in some ways. The love that is described in the Christian faith is brought out of the fullness of God, not poverty, and it descends rather than ascends. This is not to say that the erotic, ascending love is not to be acknowledged. It is and has been given its place here. But it is secondary and we know *true* love primarily in its ascending mode, travelling from a place of fullness to achieve wholeness. So, in the human dimension, it is from the wholeness perceived in faith that love travels and seeks to act. This difference between the theological view and the Platonic view is further emphasized in that the Platonic concept of justice is given the type of prominence that love, agape-love, has within the theological view and the view espoused in the present thesis.

And why is that the case? The reason is that, while Platonic love ascends towards the realm of the Forms or the ideal of the Good, justice is said to be

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<sup>206</sup> G. R. F. Ferrari “Platonic Love,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 264.

<sup>207</sup> As is explained in Plato’s *Symposium*, this is the vision of the good, the true and the beautiful that is at the end of “the heavenly ladder, stepping from rung to rung—that is, from one to two, and from two to every *lovely* body, from bodily beauty to the beauty of institutions, from institutions to learning, and from learning in general to the special lore that pertains to nothing but the beautiful itself—until at last he comes to know what beauty is” Plato, *Symposium*, 211a–c.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 201b–c.

descending. As Aryeh Kosman explains, “justice according to Plato is a matter of balance of harmony among the parts of the city.”<sup>209</sup> This principle applies also to human beings as functionally differentiated beings.<sup>210</sup> But what kind of harmony or balance then *is* justice? Kosman convincingly suggests that it is “the kind of harmony that is achieved when the differentiation of function is determined by what differentiated parts of the subject are best able to carry out the subject’s several specific functions.”<sup>211</sup> So where do we learn of the right function of things and their best relations? Well, in the realm of Forms we learn of the perfect shape of things as well as their right harmony, justice:

Think here, following the Republic’s spatial metaphors, of the divided line of Book 6 [*The Republic*] as having both a vertical and a horizontal dimension. The vertical dimension is made explicit in Socrates’ discussion, but the horizontal dimension is implied by the plurality of entities at any given level of the line. Justice may then be thought of as the ideal principle that governs the downward vector along this vertical dimension, a vector of imaging, but also of dispersion and exemplification, producing the diaspora of being whose upward direction is governed by eros, by the love that the phenomenal world has for its own true nature. As the horizontal dimension of the divided line is governed by principles of multiplicity and unification, so the vertical dimension evokes the twin themes of justice and love that properly divide and hold together the commonwealth of being.<sup>212</sup>

Therefore, it can be said that love ascends to gain a glimpse of the world forms to learn of their nature and harmony, while justice descends, rightly ordering the world according to what reason/wisdom saw in its glimpse.

That is to say, when love has moved the philosopher up to see the forms, their true nature, their unity and difference and right ordering, justice names the quality that brings the harmony of that “other world” into being to our visible world of senses. So, love is the trait that ascends to the realm of true knowledge, wisdom apprehends, and justice descends. Platonic love can, therefore, be described largely as “a search for the good.”<sup>213</sup> Love is desire which promotes the seeking of wisdom

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<sup>209</sup> Aryeh Kosman, “Justice and Virtue, The *Republic*’s Inquiry into Proper Difference,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato’s Republic*, ed. G. R. F. Ferrari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 126.

<sup>210</sup> Kosman writes: “Justice, therefore, is a virtue of any complex and functionally differentiated entity in which function is determined on the basis of virtue.” *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 126–7.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>213</sup> Ferrari, “Platonic Love,” 253.

of the good, while justice is the harmony of the various goods and the virtues both within humanity and without. This means that love is desire, seeking the good, while justice is harmony, enacting the true nature and relationship amongst the forms. Again, it can be re-iterated that within the Platonic view love is the ascending trait, while justice is the descending one. But how can this be true within a theological paradigm in which God's love descends to re-establish the right harmony, which is the freedom of communion and where justice is his operation of achieving this? It cannot. Our paradigms of love have been changed by faith in the revelation of God in a way that makes it:

1. Untenable to discuss love primarily as a desire, ascending in the search for knowledge
2. Untenable to describe the highest human virtue to be that of justice as the harmony of parts

Rather, love is that trait that seeks to bring about God's future of freedom while justice is the trait that serves love by restraining and breaking oppositions to its arrival. This, we have established what follows from attending to the revelation of God. This difference is attributable to our willingness to think on the terms of faith in the revelation. This is not meant to imply that Plato's thought is, in any way, free of such conditions. As G. R. F. Ferrari points out in his discussion of Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, Plato's discussion is determined by ideas of love that were handed down through his cultural milieu: "In both cases, Plato takes one of love's clichés and turns it to his metaphysical advantage. In the *Symposium*, the cliché is 'love promotes virtue.' In the *Phaedrus* it is 'love is wild.' From this source flow the differences between the dialogues, their limitations and their achievements."<sup>214</sup>

## ***ii. Wolterstorff on the Unity between Love and Justice***

Concerning the issue of the unity of or opposition between love and justice, Nicholas Wolterstorff has given an extensive treatment in his book *Justice in Love*. Helpfully, Wolterstorff focuses on the attributes of love and justice, making our interaction with him more pointed. In Wolterstorff's book the main thesis is that love and justice exist

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 268.



not in opposition but in unity. Wolterstorff advances his thesis as he finds some influential writers, especially Anders Nygren and Reinhold Niebuhr, to have set the two in opposition. Wolterstorff claims that Nygren tells us to side with love against justice while Niebuhr sides with justice:

A fundamental assumption in both Nygren and Niebuhr is that love may conflict with justice and nonetheless be *well-formed*. Nygren instructs us to remain faithful to love in such situations of conflict at the risk of perpetrating injustice; Niebuhr instructs us to remain faithful to justice in situations of conflict at the cost of love. Both positions prove untenable.<sup>215</sup>

Wolterstorff sees the binary between the two to be mistaken and argues that they actually coexist in a unity and that there is no opposition between them. According to Wolterstorff, loving action is acting in accordance with the requirements of justice. Otherwise it would not be love.<sup>216</sup> The two coexist, in this way, in a necessary unity. What then is Wolterstorff's understanding of justice, with which love is so strongly identified? In *Justice in Love*, Wolterstorff argues that justice consists in acting in a way that befits a person's worth,<sup>217</sup> something that we would describe as person's "actuality." Here we refer to worth as a person's actuality just as "actuality" refers to the status of a thing or a person as it is found in each moment as contrasted with what it is determined to become, its potentiality. Therefore love, in Wolterstorff's argument, would not be love unless it accords with justice, which is to act in accordance with another person's worth, another person's actuality. This worth is, in Wolterstorff's mind, rightly expressed as "a right." Wolterstorff writes that "justice, as we saw, prevails in human relationships insofar as persons render to each other what they have a right to." But what is Wolterstorff's understanding of right, the concept central to justice as he likes to see it? Wolterstorff writes:

I can now say what it is for a person to have a right to the life-good of being treated a certain way. One has a right against someone to the life-good of their treating one a certain way just in case, were they to deprive one of that life-good, they would be treating one with under-respect. They would be demeaning one. Someone's rights are what respect for his or her worth requires. Or to put it from the shadow side: to wrong someone is to treat her with less respect than befits her worth—to treat her with under-respect, to treat her as would only befit someone of less worth."<sup>218</sup> So love acts in

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<sup>215</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice in Love* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 72.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 89–90.

accordance with worth which is equivocal with right, that is to say, if it is “well-formed love” and not “malformed love.”<sup>219</sup>

Love is shown, as Wolterstorff hoped, to coexist in unity with justice in this way. This is a difficult point for us to accept if it is not qualified. Because, although we want to recognize the unity and complementarity of love and justice, we also have shown how love acts with a primary view towards potentiality. Love acts not in accordance with worth primarily, but in accordance with potentiality insofar as it sees Christ in the neighbour.

In some ways it seems that Wolterstorff may well stipulate that love and justice go together, especially when they are “well-formed.” But to say that love and justice easily go together in a Wolterstorffian manner is not a very accurate description of the way we perceive our dilemmas. Perhaps the notion belongs to the perfect state of the eschaton, where human wisdom is no longer imperfect and sees clearly, face to face. Perhaps it belongs to the perfect state wherein human potentiality simply is human actuality and the two are no longer separate, where love and justice coincide perfectly. But the stipulation does not amount to much in the moral experience of a fallen humanity in whom wisdom is broken and freedom imperfect and where our actuality exists in some kind of discontinuity to our potentiality. It still requires a greater sensitivity to “the already” and the “not yet” as well as the difference between potentiality and actuality as it regards the temporal, human realm.

When Wolterstorff writes that “the commandment to love our fellows is, I believe, no more nor less than a call to the recognition of their deserts,”<sup>220</sup> we cannot agree. Love *is* more than just recognition of desert.<sup>221</sup> The understanding that love works only in accordance with the actuality of persons, in accordance with desert and rights, threatens to shrink love from being love, the attribute that works primarily towards potentiality. Likewise, if Wolterstorff were simultaneously arguing the opposite, that love is the content of justice, it would bring us to impossible

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 101–2.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>221</sup> Timothy Jackson, in his book *The Priority of Love*, phrases the unity of and distinction between love and justice in a way that we can accept: “agapic love is most characteristically productive rather than distributive of worth.” Timothy Jackson, *The Priority of Love* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 28.

conclusions. It could lead us to deem it unjust when a person fails to engage in actions which hitherto have been understood to be loving and charitable. This is because, if Wolterstorff is equally saying that justice is encapsulated in the demands of love, it could entail that we would be acting unjustly in not giving alms, or declining to move to a Third World country to do charitable work when offered such an opportunity.

So, while we agree with Wolterstorff that love and justice are reconcilable, our construal of this reconciliation must be diverge from his as it avoids conflating the two concepts in the temporal domain. This difference between us and Wolterstorff is also evident in that we do not deny that the two concepts can and will come into opposition in both judgment and action. At the very least, we would not be keen to take the concept of unity and run with it so far as to deny that, on this side of the eschaton, love and justice are in an imperfect, broken unity and that they can, at times, frustrate each other in judgment and in act. After all, human attributes are not yet *perfect* human attributes in *perfect* human unity, and they most certainly are not divine attributes.

### **C. Divine and Human Justice: The Connection**

To recapitulate what has been argued concerning the relationship of love to justice and the other virtues we can say the following. Love names the attribute that defines God's action in seeking to bring humankind into communion with himself. Human love names the human disposition and activity that seeks to correspond with this knowledge and seeks to act so as to actualize God's determined future. Justice appears as the attribute of God whereby God's love meets an opposition and presents it with limits or destruction. Human justice names the attribute which seeks to correspond with this knowledge and seeks the curbing and limitation of that which sets itself up against the movements of love. In this way, justice appears unitary with love, serving to overcome all pretences to love's opposition. However, it is love that retains the logical priority in this unity that can be called loving justice. As regards the other virtues, whether chastity, bravery, temperance, or industry, they are all united under loving justice and serve it and take their rationale from that unity.

Therefore, all the virtues, which have their own, distinct definitions, are united in a lived synthesis, that of loving justice or, better yet, that of love.

We have now shown how love and justice are similarly connected in their human and divine manifestations. But the connection and continuity between God's loving justice and humankind's loving justice has yet to be made explicit. Nonetheless, we have established all the necessary prerequisites to easily drawing out that connection. God seeks, in his free love, to re-establish communion between himself and humankind. God accomplishes this, as we have said, through the destruction of sin on the cross of Christ, so that humankind is able to live in communion with God. Humankind is confronted with and recognizes its judgment through the presentation of The Promise, the resurrection. The human recognition of this truth results in humankind's actively awaiting the consummation of its reality, its actualization.

This active wait can arrive in two distinct yet unitary forms. First, humankind refrains from certain actions that might impinge on spaces in which the actualization of the divine-human communion can take place. This is the manifestation of human justice, well exemplified in the second table of the Decalogue. The active wait takes another form, that of loving action, which is more obviously active, creative and risk-taking than human justice. Through human love, humankind pro-actively seeks to create spaces and remove hindrances so that the divine-human communion might actualize. The connection between divine justice and human justice (as well as between divine love and human love) is thereby made clear. In recognizing God's will and action to restore communion between himself and humankind, humankind responds by actively waiting, characterized by justice and love, which are both meant to create and sustain spaces for God's loving decision to actualize. God's action therefore presents humankind with a truth about itself (that it is determined for communion with God) to which humankind then seeks to react (by creating and sustaining conditions which might facilitate the actualizations of the truth). Humankind's actions respond to and mirror God's actions, but are, as human actions, not on par with divine action. This is how it becomes clear that, while God's justice destroys opposition to the actualization of the divine-human communion, human justice can seek only to limit the transgression of the sinful opposition. And while

God's love accomplishes the future of freedom in the divine-human communion, human love can only creatively and faithfully prepare the way through which it might enter.

#### **D. Is It Justice That We Speak of?**

To some, the treatment of justice given here might seem to bypass or fail to address ideas many might entertain about the way justice functions. There is a reason for this. In the historical conversation about justice there is one tradition that is more influential and more substantial than any other and it has not yet been directly addressed. Nonetheless, it is precisely by moving through that very tradition that we are able to speak as we have spoken about justice. The tradition to which we are alluding is the tradition of justice that can, by broad strokes, be traced through Thomas Aquinas back to Aristotle. It was in describing justice that Aristotle distinguished between two special types. The first category he called *corrective justice*, which denotes an activity in which like is exchanged for like and a disproportion of loss and gain between exchanging parties is avoided. Of course, this is the type of justice found not only in economic transactions but also in punishment and retribution. As John Finnis rightly describes it, corrective justice is “the justice that rectifies or remedies inequalities that arise in dealings between individuals. These ‘dealings’ may either be voluntary, as in sale, hire and other business transactions, or involuntary, as where one man ‘deals’ with another by stealing from him, murdering him, or defaming him.”<sup>222</sup>

Aristotle however saw, of course, that what justice can mean is not exhausted by such a notion of corrective justice. This is why he developed a second category of justice. Aristotle named this second kind of justice “distributive justice,” describing a process whereby “honour, or money or the other things. . . fall to be divided among those who have a share in the constitution, according to their desert.”<sup>223</sup> Aristotle's categories of justice, as has been said, became immensely influential and have been re-used throughout the history of ethics and politics. But however important and

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<sup>222</sup> John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178.

<sup>223</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross. Revised with an introduction and notes by Lesley Brown. Oxford World's Classics. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1130a–b.

resilient Aristotle's distinction has been, it is not entirely satisfactory. The Aristotelian understanding of distributive justice is somewhat limited by being born out of a very particular experience of Greek culture and history, which was Greek colonization.

Greek colonization consisted of groups from Greeks settling in new locales with new natural resources where they had to figure how to distribute newly found wealth. O'Donovan has pointed this out and explained the challenge of transplanting already existing hierarchies into new lands.<sup>224</sup> But as Aristotle's notion of justice was being rethought in the established political orders of Christendom in medieval Europe, it became clear that there was very slim use to be made of Aristotle's category of distributive justice. In medieval Europe the political experience was very different from that of Greece. And even if one were to look away from such considerations it still seems inevitable, as O'Donovan points out, that both distributive and corrective justice could be explained by the Roman legal understanding "to each his own."<sup>225</sup> This seems to apply whether one distributes hitherto un-owned resources to an existent community (covered by Aristotle's distributive justice) or one practices corrective justice. This explains, to some extent, how Aquinas could take Aristotle's concept of corrective justice, rename it "commutative justice," and thereby expand it so that it could easily apply to every type of transaction.<sup>226</sup> While distributive justice was supposed to remain a formal category including all dealings between the whole and the individual, it can be argued that the reformulation made it insufficiently distinguishable from commutative justice.<sup>227</sup>

But there is an even greater problem with Aristotle's categories because a very important part of human experience cannot properly be placed within the

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<sup>224</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 37.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 36–37.

<sup>226</sup> Aquinas writes: "In the first place there is the order of one part to another, to which corresponds the order of one private individual to another. This order is directed by commutative justice, which is concerned about the mutual dealings between two persons. In the second place there is the order of the whole towards the parts, to which corresponds the order of that which belongs to the community in relation to each single person. This order is directed by distributive justice, which distributes common goods proportionately. Hence there are two species of justice, distributive and commutative." See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 61, a. 1, in *Summa theologiae*, vol. 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2013), 1446.

<sup>227</sup> John Finnis has given a very helpful explanation how this could be the case. See Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights*, 177–180.

Aristotelian matrix of justice. It is exactly this particular limitedness that O'Donovan describes in his *The Ways of Judgment*. O'Donovan explains how Aristotle's notion was perhaps too narrow and failed to account for a large part of the human experience of justice, which has nothing to do with distribution in Aristotle's narrower understanding.<sup>228</sup> The notion of something held in common, being distributed into the hands of private parties, is certainly a notion of something that can take place. However true that may be, it leaves one without any functional understanding of justice to answer such a wide array of ethical questions. O'Donovan helpfully makes this clear using the example of the practice of modern welfare states to provide child-allowances:

Clearly, it is not a form of compensation, as though to make good the losses of child-rearing. Child-rearing is not a loss (though there are losses incurred within it), but a form of worthwhile human living. It is no part of the work of justice to equalize differences between parents and childless persons, nor any other differences arising from the pursuit of different forms of living. Is its point distributive then? Does it place spare resources of the community at the disposal of those who have something worthwhile to do with them? No, for if that were the case, we would need to measure the worthwhileness of child-rearing against the worthwhileness of other projects laying claim to public money. The child-allowance would be determined in a proportionate relation, say, to Arts Council grants and money for hospitals, conceiving the whole distribution of public money as competition of merit. The justice in setting the allowance at a certain level would depend on answering the question: Who deserves the resources more? But this account would be as mistaken as the compensatory one. The point of a child-allowance is that the community should assist a crucial function in which it has a strong interest. Its justice depends not on comparative judgments between the merits of child-rearing and other enterprises, but on judgments about the extent to which the parents' role needs assistance.<sup>229</sup>

O'Donovan has, furthermore, pointed out Hugo Grotius's ingenious way of approaching and evaluating the Thomistic–Aristotelian tradition of justice in a way that can help one better account for all the issues included in discussions about justice. In O'Donovan's reading of Grotius, Grotius precisely “takes issue with the place assigned by Aristotle to distribution.”<sup>230</sup> O'Donovan observes that:

The real difference between the two kinds of justice, Grotius argues, is that the first has to do with reciprocity and the principle of *sum cuique*, while

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<sup>228</sup> O'Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 37–39.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 37–38.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

the second concerns ‘the prudent allocation of resources in *adding* to what individuals and collectives own.’ That is to say, it emphasizes the prospective, forward-looking aspect of judgment. This, too, is justice—but not ‘strict’ justice. Grotius re-names it ‘attributive justice,’ and proposes his revision in a simple formula: ‘To a faculty corresponds *expletive justice*, justice in the technical or strict sense of the term. . . . To a fitness corresponds *attributive justice*.’<sup>231</sup>

Hugo Grotius has, therefore, taken Aristotle’s concepts of corrective justice and distributive justice, as well as the Thomistic concepts of commutative and distributive justice, and pushed them in a new direction whereby he calls them *expletive justice* and *attributive justice*. Expletive justice has to do with a faculty a person may have that makes that person a claimant to some “right in the technical or strict sense.” Attributive justice has to do with the fitness someone might have for something, of some treatment. It does not, however, constitute a right, in the strict sense. To explain this, an example can be made of some professional post where there might be only one fully qualified candidate or many. Either way it wouldn’t matter insofar as no candidate could have a *right* to the position although some candidate may be *fit* for it and it would be *more just* for a fully qualified candidate to occupy the post. But, as O’Donovan points out, Grotius does not stop there; he makes the startling, yet necessary, inference that both types of justice, expletive and attributive, must be intertwined and coordinated in every judgment: “Grotius resists Aristotle’s assignment of the different types of justice to different spheres of action: The one exercised in voluntary exchanges and punishments, the other in distribution of common goods. In almost any context, he believes, the two types of justice must be coordinated.”<sup>232</sup> There is something very true about this observation and it will have an important effect upon subsequent thoughts of justice.

But before we reach those subsequent thoughts, let us briefly attempt to figure the notions of expletive justice and attributive justice into the matrix of the current thesis. This should not prove too difficult as we have very explicit help from Grotius in doing so. Grotius himself states that the concepts of expletive justice and attributive justice correspond to the criteria of potentiality of actuality, concepts

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<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., 39.



which we have already used heavily.<sup>233</sup> Grotius argues that expletive justice refers to a faculty which is perfect and that expletive justice thereby corresponds to the concept of actuality. It is a faculty which the human subject holds in actuality. At the same time attributive justice refers to a “less than perfect” faculty and thereby to the person or group as a potentiality. This “less than perfect” faculty nevertheless belongs to the human subject in potentiality and is taken into account in attributive justice. And there is something very true about O’Donovan’s interpretation of Grotius that, in justice, both actuality and potentiality must be taken into account. Few judgments can be completely backward-looking without considering a future aspect for subjects, that is to say their potentiality. Punishment and betterment must go hand in hand in criminal justice and likewise the “the need of populations for peace and welfare” must be part of every decision in the terrible acts demanded in war.<sup>234</sup>

This is an understandable step to take and Grotius and O’Donovan are right in taking it. However, it does put us in a very strange position with regard to justice. When attributive and expletive justice are put into this dynamic/dialectic it is difficult not to see how muddled the waters become and how unstable our judgments become, without criteria of judgment. This goes directly back to our earlier discussion of potentiality and actuality and the instability and danger of conceiving the two as equals in a dialectic. It leaves one in the dangerous position of lacking any proper criteria of judgment.

This is how Luther’s construal of the relationship between potentiality and actuality had to be restated with a clearer logical primacy for potentiality. Otherwise it would have left the impression that the actuality of sin and the potentiality of the Gospel could be considered equals in a duel. The same holds here for expletive and attributive justice, as they correspond to potentiality and actuality. Either part must enter the dialectic and assume logical primacy and our instinct must be to grant potentiality logical primacy, meaning that attributive justice should be conceived as taking charge of the dynamic/dialectic. But this might be problematic, or so it seems

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<sup>233</sup> Hugo Grotius, “The Rights of War and Peace,” in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*, ed. Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 798–99.

<sup>234</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 39.

at first. O'Donovan has pointed out that "expletive justice may not simply be overridden." So it is that, although "considerations of rights must be supplemented with considerations of prudence, the need of populations for peace and welfare," it remains true that "prudence which simply ignored the demands of exchange justice [O'Donovan's term for 'corrective justice'] could not be attributive justice, for it would not be justice at all."<sup>235</sup> O'Donovan can thereby say that "expletive justice may not simply be overridden: It is not sufficient but it is necessary, and attributive justice is secondary to the satisfaction of its demands."<sup>236</sup> So, there we see attributive justice placed in a logically subordinate relationship to expletive justice. This, in the end, is what makes it justice, and not love; that its primary reference is to actuality and its secondary reference to potentiality. In short, this explains how our discussions of justice may seem so unlike traditional discussions of justice, although they are derived from a rethinking of that very tradition.

But why are we using the concepts of potentiality and actuality here and what is their significance? What prompts the usage of these concepts in a discourse on love and justice? We can easily account for this. These concepts have deep roots in Western philosophy and theology, starting with Aristotle, and provide an excellent schema with which to address and describe change. And it so happens that we need to account for change on two important levels: first, on the subjective level, whereby everyone is presented with the goal or standard of her humanity and then, second, on the communal level whereby the subjective commitment to truth and love is played out collectively in interaction with other realities. We have already made clear how the concepts function in relation to the subjective transformation. However, we have yet to clearly draw out the change that occurs on a more collective level between institutional realities and we will do this in the next chapter, chapter 5.

Yet even though we are using the same concepts other thinkers have in the past, it is still the case that our specific use of them will be coloured by the framework within which they are being used. This means that, while we are able to stay in conversation with past thinkers concerning potentiality and actuality, any comparison will always escape perfect parallelism in the way the concepts are used. Our usage of these concepts both mirrors and differs from their usage by other

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

thinkers. So, while we have placed ourselves in a tradition initiated by Aristotle, the way in which we apply the terms would have been quite alien to him. This is because, while he was seeking primarily to describe physical change, we are trying primarily to describe a change which is rather more mental, religious or spiritual. In this we found a helpful ally in Martin Luther, who was able to make use of these concepts of change for strictly theological purposes, to make sense of the Christian life. However, our usage seeks a broader reference than Martin Luther's and so it covers the general dynamic that occurs between the subject of a truth and the development that occurs following the recognition of the truth. Furthermore, we have more distinctly applied the categories in relationship to the concepts of love and justice which, while it might not have been outrageous to Luther, is not a connection directly made in his work. In contrast, this connection is somewhat active in the work of Hugo Grotius, who does use potentiality and actuality to make distinctions within the concept of justice. But, even so, there is, in Grotius's work, no direct link established between the concepts of potentiality and actuality and the concept of love, a connection that we have made. As it relates to love and justice, Wolterstorff indeed uses those concepts heavily, but without direct reference to potentiality and actuality. What we have therefore done in the present thesis is to read Wolterstorff through the conceptual grid of potentiality and actuality. This has helped us in interacting with Wolterstorff's work in a way that is meaningful within the conceptual landscape of the present thesis.

This chapter has addressed many issues, but the uniting theme has been the question whether and how justice differs from love. We discovered, in the divine attributes of love and justice, a unity that has its correspondence in a human unity between the concepts, albeit an imperfect human unity. The unity of love and justice was explained primarily in reference to the same process, the actualization of potentiality. This was affirmed but with the important reservation that the unity of the concepts in the human realm is imperfect. Also, it was explained how love and justice have primary reference to distinct aspects of the process of actualization. Love refers primarily to that which is potentiality and justice to that which is actual and yet deemed to be in correspondence with or in the service of potentiality. However, despite the complementary unity of the concepts, love was shown to hold a

certain logical priority in the relationship. And while our discussion of justice may have been unlike much traditional discussion, we were able to show how our treatment is consistent with important developments within the tradition of justice that stretches back to Aristotle. Having completed this general account of justice, we are able to move toward the core concern of the thesis, which is temporal justice in its relationship to love.

## Chapter 5

### Justice -Temporal Justice-

The main goal of this thesis is to inquire into the relationship between love and justice, especially as it pertains to shared political structures or, as we will now be calling them, *temporal authorities*. The concept of *temporal authorities* applies to a phenomenon that has, in history, been called by various names such as “kings,” “states,” “authorities,” “secular authorities,”<sup>237</sup> “political institutions,” and so on. These concepts are taken from separate traditions of thought about what we have often referred to as “political structures.” Our own term that we will now increasingly use, *temporal authorities*, is deeply theological in nature and yet is meant to encompass the phenomena to which the various signifiers in history have been referring. The *temporal* nature of political structures (“kings,” “the authorities,” “states,” etc.) will be better explained later in this chapter. However, a short preliminary sketch can be given at this point to explain this temporal nature: The temporal nature of political structures will be derived from their particular functions without which they have no rationale. This will then be combined with the Christian hope of the consummation of God’s work which, when consummated, entails that the functions of political structures will no longer be needed. It is in this sense that political structures are *temporal* and without an eternal function or extension unlike, for example, the human being, which has a promise extending to the eschaton.

En route to this understanding we will first look through the primary scriptural witness concerning the subject and will find that it can be distinguished into the witness of judgment and the witness of affirmation of temporal authorities. We will then seek to think through this strange and seeming paradox and emerge with an answer concerning the nature of judgment and affirmation as they relate to temporal

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<sup>237</sup> The hope was originally that we could employ the concept “secular” instead of “temporal” for the simple reason that it is a common, modern concept, deeply rooted within theology and originally has a meaning analogous to “temporal.” But I found in my conversations concerning my thesis that the concept of the secular caused great confusion. It is likely that much talk concerning “the secular” lately has caused a variety of understandings to develop and for the original, rather straightforward, understanding of the concept to have been lost. I found that using the concept to explain or discuss my thesis caused too much misunderstanding to make it worth using.

authorities. The notion of space will be a pivotal metaphor in making sense of temporal authorities, the justice they wield and the ever-present activity of love. This will be helpfully clarified by an architectural metaphor. Following that we will survey a trajectory within the history of theology, wherein a pattern of similar understanding can be found, struggling to emerge.

## **A. Temporal Authorities**

So far, we have investigated the general concepts of love and justice. This has been a necessary, clarifying endeavour. Now we have been brought to the point at which we can inquire more directly concerning temporal authorities. Hitherto, we have spoken generally of the judgment and promise of multiple distinct realities. In doing so we were able to establish that the extent and content of humankind's judgment is known by the promise given to it in the Gospel. It is based upon such thinking that we have derived a notion of justice that is unitary with love in its basic aspects. However, importantly for our purposes, the language of justice is also often used *specifically* in relation to structures of temporal authority and we must therefore seek to understand whether the concept of justice should be wielded differently in that setting. Such an investigation will begin by revisiting the concepts of promise and judgment, this time in relation to temporal authorities. Our findings will move us closer to answering the question we are now seeking to answer: whether the same, unitary notion of justice and love should be applied in the realm of temporal authorities.

To put it simply: It must be asked whether there is a form of justice which applies specifically to temporal authorities. It would be possible to address this question by what has already been established in the thesis and think through its implications for structures of temporal authority. We have already developed the conceptual arsenal to do so. But, for good didactic reasons, let us first visit the New Testament texts relating to temporal authorities to better crystallize the function of the concepts of judgment and affirmation in relation to temporal authority.

### ***i. The New Testament on Temporal Authority***

We will address the texts of the New Testament as they appear, meaning that we will begin with the Gospels, move to Acts and the Epistles and finally end with the Revelation of John. Now, there is always a question as to which texts should be considered relevant to our endeavour. Many would want to employ a wide lens, meaning that every text wherein Jesus addresses poverty, nonviolence or humility should be understood to be political and relevant to the present thesis. But this will depend on how the word “political” is meant. It may be said that much, even most, of human speech and action has a political dimension of some sort when interpreted through a wide definition of the concept. However, as we are directing our attention to the question of politics more structurally, focussing on political structures and institutions and their relationship to love and justice, we will allow ourselves to employ a narrower lens and this will entail not taking note of many texts which might address the good life but have no direct reference or strict connection to political structures.

At the beginning of the Gospels one is immediately struck by the story of the birth of Jesus and its political dimension. The infancy story in the Gospel of Matthew, in particular, presents a very interesting dynamic between Jesus and political authorities (Matt 1.18-2.18). It is clear from the start that political authorities are prone to see his coming as a threat to their own power. Yet, there are exegetes who want to look past that dynamic. Instead they tend to see the general thrust of the narrative to lie in making connections between Jesus and key figures of the Judaic religion.<sup>238</sup> Such exegesis emphasizes the fact that Jesus is born in Bethlehem with a particular genealogy, using it as a vehicle to prove the Davidic kingship of Jesus. Furthermore, the story of the flight from a murderous ruler is commonly understood as drawing a parallel between Jesus and Moses.<sup>239</sup> As a result, it seems that the independent motif of the reactions of a political ruler to Jesus’s birth tends to be downplayed. But it cannot be overlooked that there is an important narrative connection made in the Gospel of Matthew between Jesus and the political structures at the time of his birth. Richard Horsley, in his book *The Liberation of Christmas*, agrees with this assessment, finding that much biblical scholarship “illustrates a

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<sup>238</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, (New York: Doubleday, 1977), 165–213.

<sup>239</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 46–47.

general lack of attention to the socio-political dimensions of the nativity narratives.”<sup>240</sup> Horsley argues that “the most fundamental theme of the story of Matthew 2, the irreducible basis of the story, has to be the opposition of the threatened King Herod, to the child Jesus.”<sup>241</sup> Horsley continues to state that “the birth of a new ‘king of the Jews’ would obviously pose a threat to the reigning monarch.”<sup>242</sup> Finding agreement with that, we would want to hold firmly in view how the political ruler is shown ready to hinder the historical manifestation and actualization of the Gospel, motivated by the desire to secure his own dominion and privilege.

Later, it will be Jesus’s own potential desire for dominion and privilege that is put to the test. Following the silent years, before the beginning of Jesus’s mission, his own desire for dominion and privilege is put to the test. When Jesus is led out into the desert to be tempted he faces three temptations. However, it should be clear that, for our purposes, it is the temptation of power over the world’s kingdoms that is of special interest. There is a difference in opinion among exegetes as to how much political relevance we find in this part of the temptation story. There are those who would downplay its political connections and say that “the narrative . . . is much more concerned with the personal relation of obedience between Jesus and his Father”<sup>243</sup> or that the problem is not worldly rule but that “the condition is the worship of evil.”<sup>244</sup> We can also find it clearly stated by another exegete that “the temptation is not to entertain a false ambition, but to seek a desirable end by unholy means.”<sup>245</sup> While it is true that Jesus’s response in both cases points to the service and worship of God, it seems strange to discount the possibility that Jesus is distancing himself from worldly rule. After all, in Luke’s version the devil is shown saying “for this has been delivered to me” (Luke 4.6), referring to all the kingdoms of the world. Also, one must ask why Jesus would at all be tempted if the temptation consisted in reaching his desired end by worshiping evil. Must not the temptation of

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<sup>240</sup> Richard Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006), 40.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Exeter, UK, The Paternoster Press, 1978), 168.

<sup>244</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 88.

<sup>245</sup> F. W. Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1981), 112.



rule over worldly kingdoms be a temptation in itself? How would Jesus have been tempted if the temptations consisted in using “unholy means”? Would it not be a likelier interpretation that, while Jesus Christ will have sovereign rule over the world, his calling is not for human palaces of earthly pretensions to power and glory, as tempting as they might be? As Walter Pilgrim writes, this temptation “to rule over all the kingdoms of the world, represents the lure to earthly power and influence.”<sup>246</sup> John Kloppenborg agrees when he writes that “the third temptation, with its apparent rejection of political power . . . amounts to a de facto rejection of Zealot ideology.”<sup>247</sup> We must, therefore, entertain the strong likelihood that Jesus is, in the story, being distanced from the temptation of worldly power and glory.

A similar distancing from political authority is found again in Jesus’s response regarding the payment of a tax to Caesar (Mark 12.13-17 / Matt. 22.15-22 / Luke 20.20-26). We can list two main trends in the interpretation of this interesting story. One reading sees Jesus as first and foremost legitimizing the state in that his reply “represents a positive and general appreciation of the role of the State.”<sup>248</sup> The other trend finds cause to interpret the text as actually downplaying the importance of Caesar. Douglas Hare questions any emphasis on positive appreciation of the state on the part of Jesus. He argues that Caesar’s role is “so vastly inferior to God’s . . . that is, Jesus is not saying ‘there is a secular realm and there is a religious realm, and equal respect must be paid to each.’ The second half practically annuls the first by pre-empting it.”<sup>249</sup> That is, everyone listening to Jesus must surely have understood that everything, ultimately, belongs to God. The Lukan account seems to recognize as much when it speaks of how people started making the false accusation against Jesus that he was forbidding the paying of tax to the emperor (Luke 23.2). Of course, Jesus did not forbid the paying of tax. But his accusers did, most likely, rightly understand that everything, ultimately, belongs to God, giving them cause for the accusation. So, we can see that the story can be interpreted in two main ways, one that understands it as legitimizing political authority, the other as annulling it. However, the two interpretations of the story need not be considered mutually

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<sup>246</sup> Walter E. Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 43.

<sup>247</sup> John Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 256.

<sup>248</sup> David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Oliphants, 1972), 304.

<sup>249</sup> Douglas A. Hare, *Matthew* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 254.

exclusive. Rather, although Jesus is, within the story, relativizing worldly political authority to a high degree he is also legitimizing it in some degree, giving it some sphere of influence or operation, however small it may be.

Another story on Jesus's response to taxation regards the temple tax but yet has Jesus describing worldly rulers as "the kings of this world" (Matt 17.24-27). Jesus asks Peter, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" When Peter said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the children are free. However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me." This is a powerful statement: "Then the children are free." Interestingly, there are exegetes who argue that the text revolves around Jesus's divine sonship and those who argue that, as it was his Father's temple, he was "not obligated to pay for the upkeep of his Father's house."<sup>250</sup> The suggestion in such interpretations is that the text is intended only to exalt Jesus as the son of God and yet have him pay the temple tax. Thereby, it is argued that the early readers of the Gospel were first and foremost being excused to retain their Jewish identities while also worshiping Jesus as the Son of God.<sup>251</sup>

One must, however, deem it strange not to pay primary attention to the fact that Jesus states that there is freedom in being exempt from the structures of taxation, whether political or religious. This cannot be overlooked. As Pilgrim writes: "No other text in the Gospels declares the sovereign freedom of the people of God over against all human authority with such force and clarity."<sup>252</sup> We see the same dynamic at play here as in the story of Jesus's remarks about Caesar's coin. Worldly political authorities are being relativized to the highest degree, but yet allowed to remain in place. It must further be noted that there is probably also some importance in the wording "so as not to give offense," which might link to coming texts in Matthew 18, where "a strong warning is issued against giving offense to any of 'these little ones who believe in me'" (18.6).<sup>253</sup> It might suggest that this is a part of a larger tendency

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<sup>250</sup> Ibid. 262.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. 263.

<sup>252</sup> Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors*, 79.

<sup>253</sup> Hare, *Matthew*, 206.

on Jesus's part "not to give unnecessary offence on secondary issues where principle is not involved and compromise is possible."<sup>254</sup> Again, this would suggest that political authorities could be considered "a secondary issue" and are thereby being relativized in the story.

But as the Gospels end with the death of Jesus within the political structure and authority of the Roman Empire, this might be seen as an open-and-shut case for the argument that Jesus Christ and political authorities ought to be viewed as facing one another in opposition. After all, Jesus was tried and convicted as a political rebel and executed on the cross, as a rebel would have been in the days of the Roman Empire. But there are a number of things that must be said concerning this. First, at no point in the Gospels does Jesus demonstrate any pretensions to make rebellion against political authority his focus.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, it could be argued that, according to the Gospel accounts, Jesus was tried and found guilty primarily by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious court, who then lobbied to have him executed by political authorities. As Raymond E. Brown writes: "For all four [Gospel] writers the Sanhedrin session ended with a decision that Jesus had to be put to death."<sup>256</sup> Following that decision the Sanhedrin began appealing to Roman authorities to have him executed. However, the main charges put against Jesus in the Sanhedrin were not political. According to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark the charges are that "he threatened to destroy the Jerusalem temple, and he claimed to be the Messiah."<sup>257</sup> Furthermore, similar accusations are made of Jesus in claiming to be the Son of God and the Son of Man (Luke 22.69-71, Mark 14.61-62). In Matthew and Mark it is clearly stated that the Jewish authorities wanted to make the case that he is a blasphemer (Matt 26.65 Mark 14.64). These are, therefore, primarily charges with religious associations.

Of course, the title of "Messiah" is more ambiguous. It most often carried political overtones in the cultural context.<sup>258</sup> But, as Daniel Harrington writes, "while the claim that he was the Messiah was true, it was true in a sense different from the

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>255</sup> Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors*, 115.

<sup>256</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, Volume I, (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 555.

<sup>257</sup> Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 383.

<sup>258</sup> Donald, Juel, "Messiah," In *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 889–90.

meaning assumed by his opponents. Therefore from Matthew's perspective the Jewish "trial" and condemnation of Jesus were a sham based upon "false witness" (Matt 26.59).<sup>259</sup> There is, therefore, a strong case that the Gospel writers did not view Jesus's Messiah-ship in the earthly political sense. However, once the leaders of the Sanhedrin pushed the case to Pilate, their charges were dressed in a way that might better place them under the latter's jurisdiction. In Luke it reads: "Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, 'We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.'" (Luke 23.1-2). Here the focus is on opposition to tax-paying and pretention of kingship, while in the Sanhedrin itself the focus was on issues of blasphemy. All of this is to say that the primary motive behind Jesus's crucifixion was most likely not that he was considered a threat to the Roman political system. Adding to this, Pilate, the representative of Roman political authority, is portrayed as being reluctant in convicting Jesus, while the Chief priests are presented as pushing for crucifixion together with the crowds that they had stirred up (Mark 15.6-15, Luke 23.21, John 19.15). It is also important to focus on Jesus as he goes through the trial, passion and crucifixion.

In the trial and passion of Jesus it is certain that the evangelists see him as being sovereign and able, if willing, to appeal to his Father who would "at once send me more than twelve legions of angels" (Matt 26.53). That is to say, in the understanding of the evangelists, Jesus willingly submits to the political processes, although not actively so.

Furthermore, throughout the entire ordeal, Jesus does not resist and is largely silent unless it is to accept or suggest his divinity or sovereignty. This is strongly illustrated in Jesus's interaction with Pilate according to the Gospel of John. There Jesus remains silent to the degree that Pilate is made uncomfortable and asks: "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" To which Jesus responds, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19.10-11). In these words there even seems to be a simultaneous relativization and legitimization of political authority.

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<sup>259</sup> Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 383.

The question that then emerges after the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus is how the emerging community of followers would navigate its relationship to political structures. In the Acts of the Apostles the reader of the New Testament gets a sense of the community that is forming following the events of Jesus's life, death and resurrection. Yet, there has been some dispute as to what the overall interpretive lens of Acts should be when it comes to political authorities. Some would want to read Acts (most often together with the Gospel of Luke) as presenting a peaceable coexistence between the Christian faith and the Roman Empire.<sup>260</sup> However, in recent decades some scholars have begun to see the relationship presented between the two in Act as less amicable.<sup>261</sup> What emerges is what many find to be a greater contrast between the early Christians and their surrounding culture than has often been assumed. As Richard Cassidy writes, "the apostles and Paul were highly dedicated disciples of Jesus who were not easily dissuaded from preaching in his name even though controversy and turbulence might result. As a consequence they were far from congenial figures in terms of the principal objectives of Roman rule."<sup>262</sup> Kavin Rowe argues that the religious critique presented in the Acts of the apostles should not be read as distinguished from culture, politics and economics. Rowe argues that "to call into question pagan religion is to critique pagan culture: tear out the threads of pagan religiousness and the cultural fabric itself comes unraveled."<sup>263</sup>

Such readings could create the sense that the Christian community described in Acts is a political community in its own right and thereby a direct challenge to the politics of the Roman Empire. This may well be, but it should be noted that this entails employing the concept of "politics" with a wide understanding wherein worship, morality and politics are all intertwined. And that understanding is perfectly legitimate. However, here we are focussing on the question of political structures more narrowly, not on a clash of cultures. And, in fact, these re-readings of Acts are presenting primarily the image of a first-century A.D. cultural clash. There is not the

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<sup>260</sup> Walter Pilgrim observes that this has most often taken the forms of reading Luke–Acts as an apologetic on behalf of Rome to the church or the Church to Rome. See: Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors*, 126–129.

<sup>261</sup> See especially: Richard Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1987)

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>263</sup> C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50.

accompanying suggestion that the writer of Acts intended to present Christian faith as a direct threat to the Roman political structure, but rather that they had a subversive effect on the larger cultural, religious and moral assumptions. Rowe writes that Acts “is a highly charged and theologically sophisticated political document that aims at nothing less than the construction of an alternative total way of life—a comprehensive pattern of being—one that runs counter to the life-patterns of the GraecoRoman world.”<sup>264</sup> Rowe advances excellent arguments for this reading. But we are more interested in the important distinction that he makes when he then adds that according to Acts “the Christian mission is not a bid for political liberation or a movement that stands in direct opposition to the Roman government.” Furthermore, “the Christians are not out to establish Christendom, as it were (chapter 3). New culture, yes—coup, no.”<sup>265</sup> To make this even clearer, Rowe states that “the Christian mission as narrated by Luke is not a counter-state.” This means that, while there is no doubt that the Christian community that was coming into being in Acts could be described as political when seen through the wide lens, Acts is not to be interpreted as political in the narrower sense.

We run into similar questions with Paul’s letters in the New Testament. There are scholars who have argued that Paul places Jesus and the early Christians in an important role in opposition to the Roman Empire. A particularly notable example of this is found in the book *In Search of Paul – How Jesus’ Apostle Opposed Rome’s Empire with God’s Kingdom* by John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed. In the book they argue that Paul’s Christology was marked by the fact that Jesus’s crucifixion was an “execution by Rome.” Therefore, according to Crossan and Reed, Jesus’s resurrection was, in Paul’s mind, a “resurrection against Rome.”<sup>266</sup> However, their thesis is not as stark as it may sound. They argue that this opposition against Rome was only secondary to a more constructive way of being: “He [Paul], like Jesus before him, had a divinely mandated program that secondarily and negatively resisted imperial Rome, but that primarily and positively incarnated global justice on the local, ordinary, and everyday level.”<sup>267</sup> To Crossan and Reed, it is important that

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>266</sup> John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, *In Search of Paul*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 384.

<sup>267</sup> Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 412.

Paul's message and view was not particular to the Roman Empire. Rather, they want to paint it as a general rejection of the ways of empires: "We are, at the start of the twenty-first century, what the Roman Empire was at the start of the first century."<sup>268</sup> To contrast Pauline Christianity with imperial civilization they say that, whereas imperial civilization of all ages tends to have as its chant—"First victory, then peace, or *Peace by victory*"—the Pauline alternative should be understood to be the contrary chant of "*First justice, then peace* or *Peace by justice*."<sup>269</sup>

One would have little trouble agreeing that it is most likely that Paul regarded himself as representing, along with the Christian community, a moral alternative to the prevailing culture in Rome. Whether Crossan and Reed are right in saying that this alternative is crystallized by the chant "*first justice, then peace*" will most likely remain in dispute. But it might matter little to our current endeavour. Even if Paul understood himself to be in opposition to or disagreement with the greater Roman culture, that would not entail that he rejected the value of courts, rulers, policing and other facets of political authority. That is to say, even if we would accept the thesis of Crossan and Reed, we would still be left without an understanding of how Paul understood the nature and purpose of political authority. They surely argue that Paul's cause was one of justice, but the question remains to what extent, if any, this touched upon the realities of political authorities.

However, Crossan and Reed do attempt to read Romans 13.1–7, a text that concerns itself directly with the place of political authorities, through their own lens. Understandably, given their framework of interpretation, they are highly sceptical of the text and draw an analogy between Paul's writings in Paul 13.1–7 and a remark made by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Nazi Germany as he performed the Nazi salute while saying, "We shall have to run risks for very different things now, but not for that salute!"<sup>270</sup> Crossan and Reed thereby attempt to suggest that, while Paul abhorred Roman authorities, just as Bonhoeffer abhorred the Nazis, in Romans 13.1–7 he is performing the equivalent of the Nazi salute to so that he can focus on more important matters. That is a strangely forced reading of a text which Paul could very well have written differently had he intended to convey the type of sentiment

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 394.

Bonhoeffer did. It is closer to reality to say that in Paul's letters, as in other letters of the New Testament, we find a few passages that could be said to argue for a peaceful, someone could say submissive, relationship between Christians and political authorities. In Romans 13.1–7 Paul writes:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."

To most readers this passage probably does appear at first to be a rather forceful request for submission to political authorities. However, this would require some nuanced reasoning. First it must be remembered that this chapter is part of an argument and not a self-standing declaration. As a text it is part of a longer encouragement and exhortation to exercise love in various settings. Emil Brunner reminds the reader of Romans 13.1–7 that it is "interposed between two instructions regarding Christian love!" Brunner adds: "Obviously there exists for Paul a hidden relationship after all." Brunner thinks that the connection between these instructions and the admonition to love is "not too difficult to find." This is because "to confront the representatives of political power with the intention of giving them their due is an outworking of love."<sup>271</sup> That is, love is the ground and motive of the instructions in Romans 13:1–7. Another thing must be kept in mind. As Brendan Byrne claims, there is an important sense in which the authority of the state is placed under God in this text, with regard to both its legitimization and its judgment. Byrne writes that "the text does . . . preserve the valid reminder that no government is a law entirely unto itself. At least in the perspective of the believer, all rule, all exercise of authority, is accountable to the supreme authority, God."<sup>272</sup> This means that there is

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<sup>271</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Letter to the Romans* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2002), 110.

<sup>272</sup> Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 389–90.



no unquestioning acceptance of the activity of political authority in all and every action as noble and good. As N. T. Wright argues, the text “does not validate particular actions of particular governments. It is merely to say that *some* government is always necessary, in a world where evil flourishes when unchecked.”<sup>273</sup>

But regarding this text we are most interested in the condition given for the divine legitimization of political authorities as stated by Paul. When Paul writes, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil” and that they are ministers authorized to “execute wrath on him who practices evil,” and then reaffirms all this by saying that rulers are “God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing,” he is describing the condition of, or rationale for, the special status of political authorities. And this is an important point: These are conditions of, or a rationale for, the existence and the service rendered by political authorities, in the course of which they restrain evil. But this raises an important question: What if there were no evil, no sin, no violence in need of restraint? We will return to this question later, at the point where we will seek a more coherent view of the New Testament attitude towards political authority.

A similar attitude towards political authorities found in Romans 13 is reaffirmed in 1 Timothy 2:1–2. There the writer focusses on the role of political authorities in creating a peaceable life: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”

The desire of the writer is that Christians may pray for kings and everyone in authority so they may lead a quiet, peaceable life. Of course, one could ask whether the author of these words saw the authorities as a potential threat to the peaceable life and wanted, therefore, to buy their peace in this way. In the estimation of William D. Mounce, the intention or thought behind the text is that if the community prays for “all people . . . and do not become sectarian in their approach, then they will not alienate those outside the church and will not bring the church into disrepute. Rather they will be able to follow lifestyles characterized by peace and tranquility.”<sup>274</sup> If this

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<sup>273</sup>N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 2* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 83.

<sup>274</sup>William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publisher’s, 2000), 81.

is right then the letter focuses more directly on seeking practical ways to lead a peaceable life than on giving a particular status or mandate to political authorities, as Paul does in Romans 13.1–7. And yet, it is clear that the author of Timothy does not see political authorities as a troublesome entity but rather is aware of their positive contribution.

In 1 Peter the reader is similarly told to submit to kings and governors and, further, to honour the king: “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and *for the* praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honour all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.” (1 Peter 2.13–17)

It is worth noting here a certain harmony with Romans 13.1–7 in that political authorities are seen as restraining evil. This is what justifies their commission or “sending.” But Peter adds an interesting dimension, which is that political authorities should also encourage those who do good. The space and encouragement that political authorities give for good conduct Peter intends the Christian community to use so that they may “put to silence” their detractors.

The focus in the text, according to Donald P. Senior, builds on the previous verses which urge blameless conduct before the gentiles. There is, therefore, according to Senior, a largely missionary component to the good conduct of Christians, as suggested by Peter.<sup>275</sup> Senior therefore emphasizes that the type of subjection being advised is not one of sectarian withdrawal but rather one of participation in the structures of political authorities. J. Ramsey Michaels adds another dimension by saying that the emphasis in this text is on “cooperation and compliance not because the state requires it, but ‘for the sake of the Lord.’”<sup>276</sup> That is, the text sees it as part of their service as Christians to establish and maintain amiable relations with political authorities.

A very different note is sounded in the Revelation of John from that of the other writings of the New Testament, especially that of the letters. There is no idea of

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<sup>275</sup> Donald P. Senior, *1 Peter* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 2003), 71.

<sup>276</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word Book Publishers, 1988), 124.

peaceful coexistence, but one of resistance against and strong judgment of political authorities. “Here as nowhere else in the New Testament, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world stand opposed to one another.”<sup>277</sup> However, such a statement on the Revelation is no matter of simple, straightforward interpretations given that the writer of Revelation employs metaphors, symbols and loaded imagery to convey his message. The symbols most often associated with political authority in the book of Revelation are the “two beasts,” and “the whore,” but also: “Babylon the great.” Interestingly, the two beasts are empowered by another entity, symbolized by the dragon (Rev 13.2). The dragon is typically understood to be primordial evil, associated with the serpent in Genesis and thereby the devil.<sup>278</sup> The great whore of Babylon is commonly understood to be a symbol of the Roman Empire “because of her idolatrous religion and excessive wealth.”<sup>279</sup>

It must be kept in mind that the interpretation of such imagery must be subject to much speculation and one must be careful not to expect it to bear too much weight. There is, for example, a fundamental division between scholars regarding whether the imagery of the book should be interpreted as referring to universal realities or particular, historical entities.<sup>280</sup> Exacerbating that debate are the divided opinions regarding the situation in which the book of Revelation is written so as to contribute to its militant symbolism. There is some evidence that it was written during a campaign of persecution conducted by Roman officials against Christians at the time.<sup>281</sup> Nonetheless, there are exegetes who dispute that and argue that there is insufficient evidence of any widespread persecutions at the time of writing.<sup>282</sup> However that may be, it is clear that the writer understands himself to be in a crisis situation together with his fellow believers. And this is what determines much of the tone and imagery of the book of Revelation. This, together with the imagery, could be argued as supporting the condemnation of political authority, as symbolized by the beasts and the whore. The suggestion is that the Revelation of John represents a judgment of political authorities to the extent that they align themselves in opposition

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<sup>277</sup> Pilgrim, *Uneasy Neighbors*, 151.

<sup>278</sup> Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 130.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>280</sup> Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation – Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 7.

<sup>281</sup> M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville, KY, John Knox Press, 1989), 16.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

to Christ and at the service of violent evil. This would help the reader better understand what seem to be the specific complaints made against political authorities in Revelation, such as objecting to the requirements for emperor worship (Rev 13.4) and warfare or persecution (Rev 13.7). These specific accusations might suggest that there is no blanket rejection of political authorities as such but that there is a more wholesome mode of being that exists for them. In its basic outline such a reading would be aligned with Oscar Cullman's reading of Revelation wherein he argues that "the totalitarian state is precisely the classic form of the devil's manifestation on earth."<sup>283</sup>

As we have now surveyed the main texts that can be deemed directly relevant to our endeavour we must now identify the fundamental motifs that emerge. What is it that characterizes the New Testament attitude to political authorities? Let us try to make sense of the picture that is emerging and obtain a coherent view of the main motifs.

## ***ii. Judgment and Political Authority***

As one looks to gain a wider view of Jesus's interaction with temporal authorities, it is soon noticed how they are made to shrink in comparison to his presence and teaching. Temporal authority is clearly displayed as just that: *temporal* authority. It does not compare to the rule brought by God in Jesus. All human authority amounts to little when confronted with the only true authority and power. This is perhaps nowhere as clearly exemplified as in Jesus's words to Pontius Pilate. As Pilate claims to have power over Jesus, to crucify him or let him go, Jesus responds: "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19.11). These words make clear that Pilate's authority is a gift, something very provisional, and not something he holds by his own might. It shrinks from and pales in the presence of the giver "from above." Pilate's understanding of his authority, strength, and power is put to shame by the fact that all these things are, ultimately, despite what he may think, not his.

Exactly this theme of putting temporal authorities in their place is found throughout Jesus's life and teaching. As we saw before, when Jesus was asked

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<sup>283</sup> Oscar Cullman, *The State in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 74.

whether one should pay tax to the emperor, Jesus replies by asking whose picture it is on the coin and receives the obvious answer that it is the emperor's. Jesus's response, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mark 12.17) has rightly been interpreted as a very disarming answer, making it difficult for anyone to accuse him of outright revolt against the emperor. However, there is more that should be said here. One must ask what, in the end, *ultimately* belongs to the emperor. The question is one that can tell us the vocation and extent of the power of the emperor. The answer must be: Nothing. Everything, ultimately, belongs to God, as one learns from Jesus's words to Pilate. Asking the question of what ultimately belongs to the emperor relativizes his authority and role, placing it completely within history. In the Lukan gospel the Jewish authorities are shown to be in full understanding of this and bring the charge against Jesus that he spoke against their paying tax to the emperor. They were, of course, making false accusations. Jesus did not forbid the paying of tax to the emperor. But he did relativize the act to a great degree, and this his hearers likely understood. They would have known that, *ultimately*, all belongs to God and not to the emperor, making it easy to bring forth the accusation that Jesus was forbidding the paying of tax to the emperor.

We saw the same pattern of relativization without abolishment when Jesus states that the emperor's tax collecting does not belong to the future of freedom. Yet the tax was paid, but with a clear understanding that, although such authority is given "from above," it is not a human authority structure that can belong to God's future of freedom.

By Jesus's presence and Jesus's words, every human authority is relativized and subverted. Not immediately supplanted, but its true ground is made clear and its ultimate destruction heralded. These authorities are placed under ultimate judgment. It is, therefore, for good reason that the Gospel of Matthew has recorded the political authorities as envious and fearful of the power and authority of Jesus, which seems to threaten and trivialize their own. Immediately following the birth of Jesus one finds the rulers trembling before the potentiality of the realization of Israel's prophecies and engaging in atrocious acts to prevent them from taking form. It goes to show that when temporal authorities do not recognize their limitations but rather seek to extend

and exercise their dominion over and against their subjects they can become destructive in a way that sets them in clear opposition to the Gospel.

Interestingly, in the Revelation of John one finds the servant community of the church in deeply hostile relations with oppressive temporal authorities. Therefore, judgment over these authorities is extremely strong in the Revelation of John. The book is written by someone who believes the Christian community is undergoing a difficult time and facing hostilities. Great metaphors are drawn up to symbolize authorities that demand worship of emperors and blaspheme against the only one that should rightly be worshipped. The New Testament therefore can be said to harbour a deeply critical attitude towards governmental authorities. The first motif we have found emerging is, therefore, judgment.

In his book *Uneasy Neighbors*, Walter E. Pilgrim, in making an exegetical exploration into the church and state in the New Testament, describes the moment we are here calling “judgment” of political authorities as two distinct moments. The first he calls “an ethic of critical distancing” from the state, the nature of which is found primarily in the relativization of the state. The second moment he terms “an ethic of resistance,” which is found when the temporal authorities put themselves in competition or opposition to the church. One can well understand how this distinction is made. But here we choose, rather, to include them both under the heading of *judgment*. It is our understanding that the judgment that relativizes the state is the judgment that, subsequently, sets the boundary for the state and determines the nature of the resistance that may or may not be due to it at any given time. Furthermore, the concept of judgment is very faithful to the basic structure of the Scriptures as it portrays the ever relevant dialectic between judgment and promise/affirmation. Where Pilgrim likes to see three distinct moments in the New Testament attitude to temporal authorities—“critical distancing, resistance and subordination”—we see two: “judgment and affirmation.” This difference is due largely to Pilgrim’s seeking to tease out the early Christian response to temporal authorities as portrayed in the New Testament. In contrast, the present thesis pursues a more strictly theological inquiry into temporal authorities vis-a-vis God’s judgment and affirmation. The notion of critical distancing figures well into the concept of judgment. We see critical distancing as the subsequent relativization of temporal

authorities that follows from the knowledge of judgment. This is why the basic moments are said to be two: judgment and affirmation.

Still, to further investigate the notion of judgment, there is more to be found in the New Testament than the promise of *ultimate* judgment to temporal authorities. Apart from this *ultimate* judgment, there are, in the Revelation of John, very direct, *specific accusations* against temporal authorities and rulers. These regard various matters ranging from the rulers' demands of emperor worship to their persecution of Christians to their incessant warfare against other peoples. One could legitimately ask how such specific accusations can be made without there being positive affirmations of temporal authorities which legitimate such charges and criticism. How could there be criticism of something if it does not include the possibility of correction, and an ideal state of being for the object being criticized? In theory, one could say that there need not be a positive affirmation to legitimate the specific accusations and critique. It would be possible to imagine complete judgment of, and rejection of, any authority with no room for positive affirmation of such realities. This would be included in an immediate call for the complete abolishment of the objects of critique. However, when it comes to temporal authority structures, this is not the New Testament witness. Next to the great judgments, warnings and accusations, there are, in fact, to be found positive affirmations of temporal authorities.

### ***iii. Affirming Political Authority in the New Testament***

We have described the encounter between Jesus and Pilate from the Gospel of John as exemplifying the ultimate relativization of temporal authorities. However, the very words spoken between Jesus and Pilate, while certainly relativizing temporal authorities, also clearly appear as the affirmation of the same temporal authorities. When Jesus says "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" these words make it clear that, while Pilate's authority is provisional, it is nonetheless a gift. It is something that Pilate has on account of divine providence and grace. As Karl Barth writes: "As power given by God, it could be used either way towards Jesus without losing its divine character. . . . Now Pilate did not release Jesus. He used his power to crucify Jesus. Yet Jesus expressly acknowledged that

even so his power was given him by God.”<sup>284</sup>

The New Testament text that most directly addresses and develops similar thoughts of the affirmation of temporal authorities must be said to be Romans 13.1–7. In the text Paul advises the Roman Christians on their proper relationship to rulers and authorities.

The way in which governmental authorities are positively affirmed in that text is compelling and might seem like a strange contrast to the more critical attitudes also found in the New Testament. The authorities that exist are here said to have been established by God to be servants and this thought is continued in other epistles of the New Testament. In 1 Peter Christians are encouraged “for the Lord’s sake [to] accept the authority of every human institution, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right” (1 Pet 2.14). In 1 Timothy 2.1–2 Christians are urged to pray for everyone. Especially mentioned are “kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” It may trouble someone that these texts say nothing about whether the authorities are always in the right or whether Christian submission to authorities should be qualified in some way. Are authorities never in the wrong? Are they to be accepted and submitted to no matter what injustice they demand or enforce? Furthermore, are not the epistles in direct conflict with the judgment heralded over temporal authorities in the Gospels and the hostility found in Revelation? How can we think through the seeming opposition between judgment and affirmation found in the New Testament? It is at this point that thinking theologically becomes imperative so we can understand how judgment and affirmation can coexist in thinking about political authorities.

#### ***iv. The Justice of Political Authorities.***

When we spoke generally about judgment and affirmation there was an understanding that judgment was made possible only through affirmation. God’s promise is what gives meaning and substance to his judgment. This entails that realities placed under judgment typically receive a promise of a reality without sin, a

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<sup>284</sup> Karl Barth, “Church and State,” in *Community, State, and Church: Three Essays by Karl Barth*, introduction by David Haddorff (Oregon, USA, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2004), 110.



reality of freedom wherein the corrupt, broken nature is redeemed and healed. Judgment is made possible by the promise because redeemed reality gives substance to judgment like light creates shadows, as what is broken is judged by that which is whole. For our present purposes let us therefore ask what the redeemed reality of temporal authorities might look like. It has been established that they are instituted by God to be “a terror for bad conduct.” But what might be the redeemed nature of an institution with such a purpose? Will there be a wrongdoer in God’s redeemed future of freedom? Will there be any violence in need of restraint? If there were, then surely it would not be God’s redeemed future, would it? In God’s redeemed future, where power imbalances, violence and wrongdoing will no longer be found, what could be the need for instituting the coercive mechanisms of temporal authorities and their accompanying monopoly of violence?

Paul claims that the authorities do not bear the sword for no reason (Rom 13.4). But what about the future when there will be no reason for monopolizing violence, putting one human being in authority over another or conducting forced taxation to maintain armies or help the deprived? These questions are being asked to suggest that there is no way that, theologically, there is anything promised to temporal authorities. In God’s future they can no longer have any rationale, any reason for existence. There will be no subjugation, no human authority structure in the eschaton, when Christ is king. Therefore, all authority structures receive a question mark on their existence as it becomes clear that in God’s promised future there will be no Roman Empire, no Prussian state nor any U.S. government. As a result, the justice that is in place in temporal government must be seen as different from that loving justice that is both revealed in Christ and actualized in his subjects. The justice of temporal authorities cannot be said to be in the process of being gradually perfected to become a heavenly *polis*. Rather, it must be said to be in the process of being supplanted because, as the actualization of the love and freedom revealed in Christ is unfolding, *the rationale behind political authority evaporates*. In the eschaton, at the end of time, there will not be any “justice of political authorities,” as the manifestations of sin which need to be restrained will no longer be actual. As it is expressed in Revelation 21.4, “He will wipe every tear from their

eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

This eventuality does not at all belittle political authority structures. They have a substantial role to play and receive positive affirmation in the New Testament for good reason. Because, although we know that sin has been judged and conquered and that the future belongs to the love and freedom of worship, sin still has empirically visible effects in our condition. The visibility of sin yet remains in our world as an “impossible possibility,” explaining the role of, and need for, political authorities. Indeed, political authorities are clearly very temporal in nature, serving a purpose within a certain condition in time. This means that the social structures, often called political, can well and rightly be called *temporal authorities*. Their structures are there because of a condition in time. The justice of their institutions is there because loving justice has not overcome violence, strife or subjugation. Their justice is temporal (meant only for the time being), serving the loving justice, the actualization process, which will one day make temporal authorities and temporal justice obsolete. But, in this period, in the temporal, there is still policing to be done, legislation to be passed and judging to be done.<sup>285</sup> This is, ultimately, what makes sense of the “yes” and the “no,” the judgment and simultaneous affirmation that political authorities receive.

It has already been established that the unfolding of the freedom of humanity is taking place in an actualization of the potentiality of love and justice as revealed in Christ. But this actualization process (like all such processes) needs space and this space is constantly threatened by non-real but actual manifestations of sin. It is for this reason that temporal authorities receive a positive affirmation in the New Testament witness together with grave warnings not to overstep its limits. The affirmation creates the space needed for people to preach, receive and grow in Christ, to actualize their potentiality. Temporal authorities are instituted to protect this space

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<sup>285</sup> Much of Karl Barth’s writings concerning temporal authorities fit well with the argument of the present thesis. However, there is one point where we might find ourselves slightly at odds with Barth, regarding the exact nature of political authorities as temporal in the specific sense presented. Barth sees political authorities as part of what the New Testament refers to as the principalities and powers over which Christ triumphs according to Colossians 2.15. According to Barth this means that “they will not be annihilated but that they will be forced into the service and glorification of Christ.” He is right that they should be viewed as providing a service to Christ. We agree wholeheartedly with this. But the other inference regarding this service, that the state will not wither away, should be resisted. It is not necessary and not the best interpretation. Cf. Karl Barth, “Church and State,” 114–117.

and must find ways not to be an obstruction within it. With the realization of God's promised future such a space no longer needs to be sustained by such a mechanism and so temporal authorities will no longer have a rationale. The simultaneous judgment and affirmation of temporal authorities is to be understood in this light. This explains how the concepts function differently within the realm of political government than in most other realities. This generates a separate understanding of the word "justice" as it relates to temporal authorities. It is a type of justice which we shall call *temporal justice*.

We have sought to know whether the language of justice and love relates in the same way to temporal authorities as it does to other realities. To this end we needed to address judgment and affirmation as they pertain to temporal authorities. Our conclusion is that the judgment and affirmation proclaimed for temporal authorities is very different from other realities. The judgment of temporal authorities will be total and their promise is a promise to be in service of the future that will, ultimately, render them obsolete. This entails that the justice of temporal authorities is not of the same kind as the justice we have described for other realities. True justice is perfected in a future of freedom. Temporal justice will not be perfected but rendered obsolete. We have therefore analysed the word "justice" into two separate phenomena: loving justice and temporal justice.

If such a distinction is not allowed, this may result in a confused or even less than amicable relationship between the loving justice of the church and the justice of the structures of temporal authorities. It can be argued that this is, in fact, what takes place in the construal advanced by Stanley Hauerwas, which does not allow for any distinction in the function of the concept of justice. Although it may sometimes appear as if he wants to dismiss the concept of justice altogether, this is not actually the case. Even though Hauerwas tries to explain "why justice is a bad idea for Christians"<sup>286</sup> he is, by such exaggeration, actually aiming at a common modern notion of justice rather than setting the concept of justice aside altogether. He believes that the problem with the common modern notion of justice is "that we have been taught by the Enlightenment to believe that in fact there is a concept of 'justice qua justice' that corresponds to an account of 'rationality qua rationality' which

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<sup>286</sup> Hauerwas, *After Christendom*, 45–68.

blinds us to the tradition-dependent character of any account of justice. Prior to any account of justice are those societal practices that make appeals to justice intelligible.” Therefore, time and time again Hauerwas points back to the church and its practices as if to say that the church is the wellspring of all of our ideas of love, justice and freedom.<sup>287</sup> Therefore, we can never take our eyes off this socially embodied reality that is the church if we ever want to speak truthfully on these subjects.

In Hauerwas’s opinion the justice so commonly spoken of in the modern era is a justice dressed up abstractly, making it always less than Christian.<sup>288</sup> If Christians are engulfed by such a separate story of justice and participate in it, this clearly erodes the notions of justice sustained by the church in her practices. The difference between the modern, public notions of justice and the social life of the church is a problem for Hauerwas, who believes that the first social task of the church is not to make the world more just but rather to *be* the church.<sup>289</sup> How else would the world learn anything about what concepts such as freedom, love and justice entail? As Hauerwas writes:

Furthermore, once “justice” is made a criterion of Christian social strategy, it can too easily take on a meaning and life of its own that is not informed by fundamental Christian convictions. For example, the appeal to “justice” can and has been used to justify the Christian’s resort to violence to secure a more “relative justice.” But is this the justice we seek as Christians?

Put differently, the problem with identifying, or at least closely associating, the meaning of the Gospel with the pursuit of “kingdom values” such as justice, freedom and equality is that such values lack the specificity and concreteness of the kingdom as found in Jesus’ life and death. . . . The problem is not that the kingdom brought by Christ is too idealistic to be realized. The problem is just the opposite. The kingdom present in Jesus Christ is the ultimate realism that rightly calls into question vague, secular ideals of freedom, equality and peace. In other words, we do not learn about the demands of the kingdom by learning about freedom and equality; rather, we must first experience the kingdom if we are even to know what kind of freedom and what kind of equality we should desire.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Hauerwas writes: “love and justice become abstraction divorced from concrete practices necessary for Christians and non-Christian alike to know what we mean when we say ‘justice.’” See Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith*, 230.

<sup>288</sup> Hauerwas, “The Servant Community,” 389.

<sup>289</sup> “I am challenging the very idea that the primary goal of Christian social ethics should be an attempt to make the world more peaceable or just. Rather, *the first social ethical task of the church is to be the church—the servant community.*” Ibid., 374.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 389.

The firm emphasis on the church as the wellspring of these concepts in its social practices places great pressure on Hauerwas to explain why the activities of the church should be non-negotiable and conducted without any apparent diminution of the Christian ethical demand as witnessed by the church. Such a diminution would, within the Hauerwasian view, entail a loss of the wellspring of true virtue as it is sustained by the practices of the church. This creates the possibility of an either/or relationship between the loving justice of the church and the justice of temporal authorities. Because how could temporal authorities, within the Hauerwasian scheme, be said to be the enactors of justice without fully mirroring the activities of the church? How could it be justice at all, if it is not in accordance with the socially embodied tradition of the church?

The paradigmatic example of how this plays out concretely is in the example of non-violence, which Hauerwas heralds as the defining virtue of Christians. How can one be a Christian (which, according to Hauerwas, entails a strict adherence to non-violence) and simultaneously be a public official who organizes or participates in the police force or military affairs? Is not the possibility of violence an essential factor in the function of temporal authorities, thereby rendering any participation in such orders off limits for the Christian, according to Hauerwas? Hauerwas has contested that this is the case. He has claimed that violence is not a necessary or an essential factor to the state and that, therefore, the Christian is not necessarily obliged to withdraw from the secular order wholesale. However, he does maintain that Christians cannot have any hand in governmental actions that can be considered violent:

I do not believe it entails an indiscriminate rejection of the secular order. Rather, I maintain that Christians must withdraw their support from a “civic republicanism” only when that form (as well as any other form) of government and society resorts to violence in order to maintain internal order and external security. At that point and that point alone Christians must withhold their involvement with the state. Such an admission, however, hardly commits me to a sectarian stance, unless one assumes, as some do, that every function of the state depends on its penchant for violence.<sup>291</sup>

As we noted in chapter 1, we are still left with a problem of definition concerning what counts as violence. Do we employ wide or narrow definitions? Almost every

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<sup>291</sup> Hauerwas, “Why the Sectarian Temptation is a Misrepresentation,” 105.

law and regulation could be considered violent when wide definitions are employed. It therefore sounds hollow when Hauerwas claims that a Christian must not withdraw from the state or supersede it completely. He himself concedes this in part, in discussing himself and John Howard Yoder, as he writes: “neither Yoder nor I are ‘sectarians.’ We are rather theocrats. It is just very hard to rule when you are committed to nonviolence. But we are willing to try. ‘Try,’ however, means that politics is always a matter of persuasion.”<sup>292</sup>

One must be reluctant to call this a recipe for any type of authentic engagement with temporal authorities. Moreover, there are surely other criteria for Christian living than non-violence which are also to be greatly revered and these must create similar problems for the Christian wanting to have a share in temporal politics when political processes are not perfectly aligned with the ideal of the church. In the end, Hauerwas must be said to allow for little or no difference between loving justice and temporal authorities. Either temporal authorities mirror the loving justice of the Christian or else there is cause for retreat. This breeds an unstable either/or policy of triumph or retreat. Importantly, this would be somewhat ameliorated if Hauerwas were to appreciate that temporal authorities provide an important service in the temporal and that, therefore, this service has its own rationale and demands an appropriate Christian discipleship.

But not any of differentiation within the concept of justice is satisfactory. This is seen in the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr does differentiate between the justice that takes place in temporal authorities and the justice that is found on a more intrapersonal level. But this difference that Niebuhr emphasized was not one of type but rather of degree and does not, therefore, fully make the correct distinctions between types of justice. The rationale for imagining the difference to be one of degree is that, according to Niebuhr, although love may reign mostly free in the relations of two persons, matters change “as soon as a third person is introduced into the relation.”<sup>293</sup> At that point, “even the most perfect love requires a rational estimate of conflicting needs and interests.”<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Stanley Hauerwas, “A Haunting Possibility: Christianity and Radical Democracy,” in *Christianity, Democracy and the Radical Ordinary*, Stanley Hauerwas and Romand Coles (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2008), 22.

<sup>293</sup> Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, vol. 2, 248.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 248.

This is an important point in Niebuhr's theology of love and justice. It means that, according to Niebuhr, the demands of justice change the minute more persons enter into a relation or a situation. This assumption could possibly influence how temporal justice ought to be conceptualized, or so one would be inclined to think. But as we approach Niebuhr on the issue of love and temporal justice we find that, while he realizes that there is a difference between his general idea of justice and temporal justice, he makes it out to be a difference in degree rather than a difference in type. The reason perfect love must receive a compromised shape (and become justice) is that "even if perfect love were presupposed, complex relations, involving more than two persons, require the calculation of rights."<sup>295</sup> This means that at the point in which many persons become a part of a deliberation about ethical action, the moral scene changes and love must be compromised. Furthermore, as the number of participants and affected agents increases, this compromise becomes ever more necessary and pronounced. Within Niebuhr's schema, one can almost say that love must compromise itself to be love (perfect justice) because justice "that is only justice is less than justice."<sup>296</sup>

This is why "the moral ideal of Christ," according to Niebuhr, is indeed difficult to achieve in general but especially so on the level of social groups and nations: "This new life in Christ represents the perfection of complete and heedless self-giving which obscures the contrary impulse of self-regard. It is a moral ideal scarcely possible for the individual and certainly not relevant to the morality of self-regarding nations."<sup>297</sup> So, although Niebuhr clearly understands that there is a difference between general justice and temporal justice, this difference is *one of degree and not of type*. The reason why temporal justice is often different is that, typically, so many parties are concerned in deliberations on temporal justice. Contrary to our contentions in this thesis, this has little to do with the specific task of temporal authorities. It is simply that the compromise of love should, within Niebuhr's schema, become greater the more people are party to a moral situation. The justice exercised in temporal authority is plainly an even more compromised form of perfect justice (love) but not a justice with a specific criterion that depends

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>296</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Ethic of Jesus and the Social Problem," 32.

<sup>297</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and His Communities*, 30.

on its specific role. This we must judge critically. However true it may be that a judgment concerning justice will become complicated with the greater the number of parties to a situation there is, it does not explain the calling and responsibility of temporal authorities. Temporal authorities are of a different kind insofar as they serve a future they will have no share in and yet clearly are called to serve it. Therefore, it must be argued that justice should be analysed into loving justice and temporal justice. Niebuhr clearly fails to do this although he recognizes that a change occurs in the demands of justice the more complex the situation becomes. But that does not provide any helpful guiding criteria for determining the shape of justice practiced by temporal authorities. We have argued here that such a differentiation must be made. But to make better sense of what “temporal justice” might mean, let us now seek to describe the relationship of love to the type of justice we have named temporal justice.

## **B. Temporal Justice**

The fact that it has now been established that temporal authority is *given to sustain the space needed for the potentiality of loving justice to be actualized* has further implications for our conceptualizations.

One can no longer say that love becomes justice, because the justice of temporal authorities should mirror, or be analogous to, the loving justice Christians proclaim and hope for. Christian love does not, simplistically, become Christian legislation. Neither is there a peaceful boundary between love and temporal justice. This is because there is another criterion for the interrelationship between love and justice to be deduced from what we have established. Temporal justice is the space created that allows love to be actualized. This means that the criteria of the exercise of political judgment for the queen, the statesman or the democratic citizen would be whether such a person is ready to give Christians, or people of other persuasions, the social space within which to actualize love as they imagine it should be.

Now, according to what has been said, love is surely involved in our temporal governance. But this is not a love that forces others to comply, or share its objects of affection. It is a love that seeks *a temporal justice* that allows for love to take form. Consider the civil rights movement in America. Leading that movement there were



surely people who had a conviction about the proper content and expression of love. They surely championed their cause against much hatred and scepticism. However, the legislation that was implemented as a result of the civil rights struggle was not legislation that forced people to stop hating each other and start loving. Such a thing cannot be commanded. However, the civil rights movement, spurred by people's love, demanded that temporal authorities carve out a *space* for people so that they *could* learn how to love one another. Love was surely involved in the construction of temporal justice—just not in the crude way often imagined when love and temporal justice are collapsed in theory.

In the present thesis we have, therefore, already brought forth helpful guidance which shows how temporal justice is responsive to love without the dangers of theocracy and how temporal justice avoids quietist unresponsiveness to love. This means that the state is not theocratic in its leanings nor is it unresponsive to the demands and political relevance of love. This is, in itself, simple, but it might still be that the mind is somewhat unaccustomed to this way of thinking about such things. After all, the human mind seems prone to a certain type of binary thinking which does not allow for such a synthesis. How can temporal authorities be responsive to love without over-determining the lives of its citizens, that is, without being, to some degree, theocratic? How, can it, at the same time, circumscribe the role of love without falling into the common pitfalls of liberalism, in which little or no vision sustains or guides the civil community? This, of course, should already be clear. But in order to facilitate the visualization and crisp understanding of the theory already laid out let us now, first, explain the concept of space and then, *later*, present a helpful clarification by way of an architectural metaphor.

### ***i. The Notion of Space***

The concept of space has now been used repeatedly and the hope is that it has gradually become clearer in what way the concept functions in this thesis. But let us recapitulate and elaborate it as a concept. Three forms have already been introduced. First, we discussed space in connection with human love, second, in connection with human justice and, third, in connection with temporal justice. In each instance space

was a concept of central importance. In our discussions of human love, we established that human love is a creative but risky undertaking which seeks to create and sustain spaces wherein freedom/potentiality can actualize. When we treated human justice we concluded that human justice involves refraining from certain actions as well as actions that protect spaces within which freedom/potentiality could actualize. Finally, when laying out temporal justice we described temporal justice as the creation and sustaining of spaces wherein human love can actualize. It should be pointed out that, although this thesis has tackled five major concepts of love and justice, the concept of “space” has appeared only in the discussion of the three particularly human forms of love and justice. This has to do with the difference and distinction between the activity of God and the activity of humankind. It is God who accomplishes the determination of humankind as free in communion with himself. Furthermore, it is not humankind that can, by its own power, directly actualize God’s determination and promise. Rather it is up to God, who can empower humankind’s actions to contribute to his glorious future. This means that, strictly speaking, humankind does not directly accomplish that for which it works. From the standpoint of its own subjectivity it can only seek to create spaces where God can be received and where there will be fewer hindrances and other forms of resistance to the actualization of his will: “Prepare the way of the Lord” (Mark 1.3). In this way the concept of space is, obviously, somewhat of a metaphor for a more complex and messy reality. But it is, nonetheless, a very helpful conceptualization that captures well the inner logic of the relationships we have sought to tease out between love, justice and freedom/potentiality. But since temporal justice refers to both human love and human justice (and is in fact subsumed by them), its accompanying concept of space functions somewhat differently from its functions in other domains.

But what then is this space which is central to our descriptions of “temporal justice”? First it was said to be a type of space created and sustained so that human loving justice could actualize. This type of space is created and sustained by temporal authorities and therefore must be understood with reference to the legal, structural and institutional forms that temporal authorities have as their focus. Temporal justice is shaped by its ongoing relationship and interaction with love. Loving activity creates a form of life, a presence that requires space. To some degree

its sheer presence already colonizes or makes use of pre-existent spaces. In another way it may put pressure on the pre-existent legal and structural norms. In what way? Well, the form of life created by the activity of love, for example the love of Christians, might entail actions that go beyond or counter to the forms and structures already maintained by temporal authorities. If, and when, this is the case it might require a response from temporal authorities. Furthermore, such communities of loving activity might bring certain concrete requests to temporal authorities, seeking changes which help the actualization of love as they understand it.

We find an obvious example of this in the case of Quakers in the United States. Quakers can be exempted from military service because of their pacifist beliefs. By this it can be seen that the space created and sustained by temporal authorities is a social space that concerns legislation, societal structures and institutions. But to some this might sound as if we are simply discussing a form of negative space, synonymous with discussions of negative freedom wherein loving activity is freedom from restraint. There is some truth in that but the truth is not unilateral. It makes temporal authorities within our scheme sound too reactive and not engaged enough in an act of political judgment. Criteria of judgment will be better discussed below. At this point we can say that one would certainly be right to assume that there is something like an aspect of negative freedom (or something analogous to it) involved in political judgment. But that is not all. Pointing to Jesus's confrontation with Pilate we have, it is true, described temporal authorities as "knowing nothing of truth." But, again, the truth of that statement must be seriously qualified by the still very practical task of temporal authorities to maintain the basic peace and order for loving activity to resume without much threat. And the social domain, as was said before, and as the Scriptures are very sensitive to, is a place susceptible to strife and factionalism. It is, simply put, a very delicate entity that needs to be engineered with respect and care for that very reason.

It can in like manner be said that temporal authorities will not choose the route of completely determined, positive space, upholding only a positive freedom. Such measures will suppress and likely be maintained (in more diverse societies) only by the violence from which temporal authorities are meant to protect people. The spaces of temporal authorities, therefore, will be described neither as negative

nor positive spaces but as *suggestive spaces*. These notions of social spaces as negative, positive and suggestive can be very helpful for explaining the relationship between love and temporal justice. However, their use, at this point, might be confusing without further grounding or explanation. Therefore, let us explain these concepts by reference to an architectural metaphor. This metaphor will help us not only to understand the concepts of positive, negative, and suggestive space, but also to better understand our most fundamental contention concerning love and temporal justice.

## ***ii. Temporal Justice: The Architectural Metaphor***

Someone might wonder why we would need any help from architectural metaphors to explain our project. It might seem less than obvious what the connecting points are with the present thesis. Yet it has been made clear that the concept of space is integral to our conceptualizations as well as our understanding of the interplay between love and temporal justice. And it is a fact that space is a domain in which the architect is extremely knowledgeable. It can even be stated that “Architecture is the thoughtful making of space.” As Herman Hertzberger writes: “If the architect is a specialist anywhere, then it is in orchestrating the spatial resources and whatever these are able to accomplish. He must accept his social and cultural obligations and concentrate on the creating and shaping of space.”<sup>298</sup>

### **a. Positive and Negative Spaces**

In the domain of architecture, space is called “negative space” if it is unshaped by the placement of “figures” (figures being the blueprints or shapes of buildings as represented on a page, canvas or other background). Space is called “positive space” if it has a distinctive shape. For example, a positive space would be created if three school buildings are placed into a “U” form, creating a space between them which resembles a quadrangle. Such a space could be used for social interaction or lingering and would likely be treated as such. A negative space would result if those same buildings would be organized in a straight line, promoting movement away

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<sup>298</sup> Herman Hertzberger, *Space and the Architect: Lessons for Students in Architecture*, (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2010), 9.

from the school buildings and discouraging student lingering.<sup>299</sup> Negative space is anti-social. But when it comes to positive space one can say that there is positive space . . . and then there is positive space. A parking lot outside a shopping centre may be positive space, but it is an over-determined positive space. It would occur to no one to sit down in a parking space to read a newspaper or engage in any type of activity other than parking and walking to and from. Also, a public tennis court open to all is a positive space but, again, one that is over-determined. In the same way there is a difference between the quadrangle formed between school buildings and a natural, inner city grass-field with football goals placed on either side. Both might be of equal size, covered in green grass and surrounded by buildings, and both will have to be described as positive spaces. Yet, the field with the football goals is what we are calling an over-determined positive space.

### **b. Space and Place**

Spaces receive their shapes from places, that is, from buildings. But the distinction between space and place can be elusive. This is because space and place remain in an interesting, developing relationship. Herman Hertzberger helpfully writes that “Place is where you recognize yourself, something familiar and safe, especially for you. When a large number of people have the same feeling and derive from it the sense of being linked together, it is a collective place.”<sup>300</sup> Space is, furthermore, according to Hertzberger, something of a necessity for humankind and is expressed as an urge that is “aimed outwards” and so is “centrifugal by nature.” However, as we access, live in and make use of spaces, human beings engage in what can best be described as “colonization” of the spaces given and encountered. As Hertzberger writes:

If space-accessing desire has centrifugal directionality, once that space is colonized our attention turns to ever more drastically opening it up and exploiting it in our minds. More and more associations take hold and, with these incorporated in our familiar world, our focus in time becomes increasingly inward-looking, concentrated on the mentally and emotionally newly accessible area.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Matthew Frederick, *101 Things I Learned in Architecture School*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 5–6.

<sup>300</sup> Hertzberger, *Space and the Architect*, 24.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

In the end this is what makes clear the strange dialectic between space and place. They are in an ever-developing relationship whereby space becomes place. Consider Hertzberger's words: "This is how our centrifugal desire makes the switch to centripetal attraction; space, appropriated and familiar, becomes place." This is important: "space, appropriated and familiar, becomes place." The result is that collective places, given space, can make use of such spaces, and, in the end, these spaces might become something like an extension of the place that, originally, was just making use of it.

However, whether a space is simply colonized from its genesis without any further potential depends on the process of space-shaping carried out by architects or relevant authorities. This danger is implicit in over-determined spaces more than it is in suggestive spaces. Here we observe that the good architect seeks as little over-determination as possible. "The thoughtful making of space" consists in recognizing that freedom is not achieved by architecture, but that freedom can only be facilitated by it. The architect so fashions a space that the collective place may grow in a way that is consistent with the internal logic of the collective itself. And such growth and movement should not be forced (read: over-determined), only suggested. Otherwise it might risk impeding the growth of both place and space.

The important lesson here is that certain building plans "allowed" by authorities create public spaces between collective places. If this is done, then one need fear neither an array of negative spaces nor an urban desert of unconnected buildings. Rather there is a space that is suggestive of how it should be engaged with. It is a space that is neither simply negative nor simply positive, but *suggestive*, taking into account the existence of the places of the collective. It does not constrain or over-determine the use of its public spaces. Neither will it be lacking in positive space, as some contemporary suburbs are. Rather, proper architectural determinations, following the theoretical instincts of the present thesis, would create spaces that neither over- nor underdetermine but instead create spaces that are suggestive.

To apply the architectural metaphor let us move the discussion to an actual historical example. When Martin Luther King, Jr. and African American Christian communities in the United States mobilized alongside their white brethren with the

same cause—to request a space in which blacks and whites could live, love and work together—the results ultimately became clear. The space created by authorities was not over-determined. No one was forced to love their brethren of another colour. Neither was there an under-determination of space. There was no indifference to the communal, societal aspect of the issue ending with a “separate but equal” policy. Rather, social spaces were opened up so that people of different ethnicities could love each other. Here the temporal authorities reconfigured the public space, which made the public space neither entirely a simple positive space nor a negative space, but a suggestive space. The temporal authorities decided to give a certain expression of love the benefit of the doubt and to restructure its internal spaces so that this love might move freely without structural hindrances. Then they could contemplate doing the same for other public social groups.

The fact that the temporal authorities decide the extent to which they will grant space to certain forms of love means that the state and its institutions create and sustain a certain type of space. This granting of space will be determined by temporal authorities based on a demand or perceived need for such a space. This means that there will be, within the legal and institutional frameworks, clues as to what kind of life, or love, temporal authorities deem worthy of such spaces. To continue with the architectural metaphor: The state will be reactive, but also deliberative, meaning that it will not only fashion negative spaces but also that it will sustain, through the same processes, spaces which give suggestions/clues as to what human life and love can or should look like. It neither determines a completely prescriptive, positive space nor provides an empty, negative space where no one wants to dwell. This describes a dynamic between love and the justice of temporal authorities that creates a level ground for clarifying their interactions.

### **c. Spheres and spaces. From Augustine to Luther to O'Donovan**

There are, in the history of theology, political theologies that are not uncongenial to theology of the present work. In fact, similar patterns of understanding can be found struggling to emerge within the history of theology. It is, for example, first with Augustine that we discover a notion of temporal authorities that suggests early developments of what we understand here by the notion of space and the temporal

understanding of governmental authority on which it rests. Augustine, as is well known, employed his use–enjoy distinction to navigate earthly reality, using it to explain that God is to be enjoyed, while all of earthly reality is to be used.<sup>302</sup> It was to be no different when it came to the earthly reality of governmental authority. In Augustine’s view, temporal authorities should be used and, indeed there is much use for them. Governments, like all other institutions of coercion, are, in Augustine’s understanding, both useful and necessary because of sin, harmonizing with what has been established in the current thesis with regard to the role of temporal authorities:

This servitude is, however, penal, and is appointed by that law which enjoins the preservation of the natural order and forbids its disturbance; for if nothing had been done in violation of that law, there would have been nothing to restrain by penal servitude.<sup>303</sup>

This is further emphasized when Augustine writes that there will be no need of or use for such a mechanism of preservation and restraint in the eschaton, in “that heavenly home in which the duty of ruling men is no longer necessary.”<sup>304</sup> Thus we find a degree of harmony between this point in Augustine’s thought on the nature of worldly government and our insight as to what its proper role and function is. Since temporal authority is just a preservation mechanism and there will be no human government in the eschaton, governments cannot be conceived as ever perfecting justice as love does. Government does not hold the righteousness perfected by love as it is, by its nature, antithetical to rightly ordered human relationships. It is only needed and given because human relationships and justice went so terribly awry.

Interestingly, this temporal authority, described by Augustine, and the justice it wields, a semblance of a criterion for its own operations and its relationship to love, one that is similar to the one we are developing here. One can move closer to grasping that criterion by looking to another aspect of Augustine’s understanding of government, where something congenial to our concept of space can be discerned. Augustine thinks that there is a very natural phenomenon that calls for government to

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<sup>302</sup> Augustine *On Christian Doctrine*, 1. 5 *Augustine On Christian Doctrine*, transl. James Shaw. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff, (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1202.htm>>.

<sup>303</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, transl. Marcus Dods, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, first series, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, [1887] 2007), 19.15.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.16.



come about, the desire for bodily peace. Augustine notes to his readers how animals also form protective structures to maintain bodily peace amongst themselves:

For the most savage animals . . . encompass their own species with a ring of protecting peace. They cohabit, beget, produce, suckle, and bring up their young, though very many of them are not gregarious, but solitary—not like sheep, deer, pigeons, starlings, bees, but such as lions, foxes, eagles, bats. For what tigress does not gently purr over her cubs, and lay aside her ferocity to fondle them? How much more powerfully do the laws of man’s nature move him to hold fellowship and maintain peace with all men so far as in him lies...<sup>305</sup>

This also holds true for human beings as bodily creatures. However, there is an important distinction to be made in light of the fact that Augustine also sees the human being as rational. The fact that human beings are rational makes them desire something more than simple bodily peace. They seek to subordinate everything, including their need for bodily peace, under their rationality in “a well ordered harmony of knowledge and action”:

But, as man has a rational soul, he subordinates all this which he has in common with the beasts to the peace of his rational soul, that his intellect may have free play and may regulate his actions, and that he may thus enjoy the well-ordered harmony of knowledge and action which constitutes, as we have said, the peace of the rational soul.<sup>306</sup>

We thereby are told that the rational being seeks a different form of peace that surely, like bodily peace, needs food and drink but is not fulfilled by it. There is surely a bodily peace that all living beings need. But human beings have, in their rational capacity, a need for a rational peace which subsumes bodily peace and gives it meaning and direction. Augustine knows this because he recognizes that for Christians their knowledge of God subsumes all their understanding. Christians need this rational peace that subsumes their bodily peace. Importantly, Augustine recognizes that there are multiple conceptions of what the content of the rational peace should be, but also that the need for bodily peace is common to all. This is why the heavenly city “maintains a common agreement among men regarding the acquisition of the necessities of life, and makes this earthly peace bear upon the peace of heaven.”<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 19,12

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 19, 14.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 19,17.

This means that, according to Augustine, Christians want bodily peace in common with members of the earthly city but also strive for a peace that gives them the sphere that allows their loving, rational comprehension of God to subsume this bodily peace. One can therefore infer from Augustine that Christians should seek forms of government and laws that they judge to be best able to sustain these two forms of peace.

It can therefore be argued that we find, in Augustine, a notion which can be likened to the spaces created and sustained by temporal authorities as discussed in this thesis. The likeness is, first, that temporal authorities are, for Augustine, more a preservation mechanism than a didactic, edifying organization such as we find in classical political theory. Second, the likeness is that, according to our reading of Augustine, on his view of temporal authorities is they are made to sustain certain spheres. In Augustine's case these are the bodily and the rational spheres within which people can grow according to their own inner logic and love. However, things are not as neat and simple as they might seem at this point. Augustine did run against the grain of that which we have presented here as the kernel of his teaching, in both word and deed. A reader of his *City of God* will eventually reach the description of the Christian princes where it says: "They [Christian princes] are happy . . . if they make their power the handmaid of His majesty by using it to spread His worship to the greatest possible extent."<sup>308</sup>

Here, Augustine seems effectively to say that a Christian emperor should use his power to spread God's worship. The active distinction between bodily peace and rational peace is compromised and the notion of rational space is placed in jeopardy. This is further re-enforced by Augustine's deeds whereby he agreed to and supported the governmental coercion of the unruly Donatist Christians.<sup>309</sup> After all that has been established, this surely must be some kind of a contradiction. As is well understood in the modern age it is very possible to create laws that "do not cause a hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God"<sup>310</sup> without actively having worldly authorities expanding this very worship. But perhaps this

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 5,24.

<sup>309</sup> John Bowlin: "Augustine on Justifying Coercion," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 17 1997, p. 49–70.

<sup>310</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, 19,17.

contradiction should not come as a great shock. In ancient times and classical political philosophy, faith and government were so intimately connected that it was undoubtedly difficult to imagine drawing a strong distinction between them. So it seems that even though Augustine laments the fact that Christians have not been able to make common laws of religion with Rome and that they have had to be “compelled to dissent”<sup>311</sup> and “become obnoxious to those who think differently,”<sup>312</sup> he also could hold the view that once the rulers are Christian, they will be active in spreading of the worship of the Christian faith on their behalf. We seem to have found that Oliver O’Donovan is right in maintaining that for Augustine there is, in the case of worldly government, “not a neutral meeting space, a ‘naked public square.’”<sup>313</sup>

It is nonetheless important to remember that Augustine did offer helpful and interesting principles concerning the relationship between church and worldly authorities that would transform the shape of that discussion forever. And similar principles were to be taken up and rehearsed by the reformer Martin Luther.

To Luther it was also true that governmental authority is a preservation mechanism within the condition of sin and violence that still exists. Because of this condition, Luther wanted to affirm a strong distinction between the spiritual sphere and the temporal sphere and the principles according to which they are to be operated. The spiritual principles of the gospel, according to Luther, have little to offer in the reality of temporal governance because

to try to rule a whole country or the world by means of the Gospel is like herding together wolves, lions, eagles and sheep in the same pen, letting them mix freely, and saying to them: feed, and be just and peaceable; the stable isn’t locked, there’s plenty of pasture, and you have no dogs or cudgels to be afraid of. The sheep would certainly keep the peace and let themselves be governed and pastured peaceably, but they would not live long.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>313</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, “The Political thought of *City of God* 19,” *Bonds of Imperfection*, Oliver O’Donovan and Joan Lockwood O’Donovan, (Cambridge, U.K, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), p.58.

<sup>314</sup> Martin Luther, “On Secular Authority,” In *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority*, ed. and transl. Harro Höpfl, *Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 11–12.

As Martin Luther had a tendency to emphasize opposites he draws a clear distinction between “the two governments,” as he calls them:

Therefore care must be taken to keep these two governments distinct, and both must be allowed to continue [their work], the one to make [people] just, the other to create outward peace and prevent evil-doing. Neither is enough for the world without the other. Without the spiritual government of Christ, no one can be made just in the sight of God by secular government [alone]. However, Christ’s spiritual government does not extend to everyone; on the contrary, Christians are at all times the fewest in number and live in the midst of the Unchristian. Conversely, where secular government or law rules on its own, pure hypocrisy must prevail, even if it were God’s own commandments [that were being enforced]. For no one becomes truly just without the Holy Spirit in his heart, however good his works. And equally where spiritual government rules over a country and its people unaided, every sort of wickedness is let loose and every sort of knavery has free play.<sup>315</sup>

Martin Luther does not use the concepts of bodily and rational peace, as did Augustine, but yet he employs something quite similar. He distinguishes between earthly matters and matters of the soul. Temporal authorities create peace for the body by its laws and enforcements and peace for the soul by their strict non-interference into matters of soul.

Secular government has laws that extend no further than the body, goods and outward, earthly matters. But where the soul is concerned, God neither can nor will allow anyone but himself to rule. And so, where secular authority takes it upon itself to legislate for the soul, it trespasses on [what belongs to] God’s government, and merely seduces and ruins souls.<sup>316</sup>

A distinction between the rule of the church and the rule of temporal authorities was, therefore, early very operative within Luther’s thought. But however strongly and forcefully Luther tended to emphasize this distinction, the historical realities of his time made it extremely difficult. The reformation could not survive without assistance from secular rulers. If the reformation was to survive Luther needed two things to happen which ran counter to his commitment to a distinction of governments, temporal and spiritual. He needed to secure the support of the temporal rulers and make sure that unsympathetic rulers would not fight against it.<sup>317</sup> This tended to create a difficult contradiction in his tracts which James Estes has called an

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>317</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 152.

“exercise in admitting the prince into the church by the back door while ostentatiously denying him entry through the front door.”<sup>318</sup> This tactic appears very typically in his letter to the nobility of the German nation. In the letter it is shown how Luther argues that when it came to reform within the church the primary responsibility should lie decisively with the clergy.<sup>319</sup> At the same time, however, Luther insisted that when the authorities have strayed from the Gospel they have also forfeited their right to be obeyed. Under such circumstances Luther is convinced that it is everyone’s duty and call to do what one can do to help and lead the church on to its right path.<sup>320</sup> Christians who happen to be princes should therefore exercise their princely secular authority to manage emergencies within the church.<sup>321</sup> In *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* Luther writes:

For this reason the Christian Nobility should set itself against the pope as against a common enemy and destroyer of Christendom for the salvation of the poor souls who perish because of this tyranny. . . . The nobility should restore to the local bishops their right and responsibility to administer the benefices in the German nation to the best of their ability.<sup>322</sup>

While Luther positively affirmed a distinction and a function of temporal authorities akin to that for which we have argued here and similar to that of Augustine, its principles are not upheld very consistently. Luther finds it impossible, for theoretical or practical reasons, to let the word of distinction between the two governments be the last word. This should come as no surprise. As a thinker Luther was want to create polarities and allow them to play against each other without necessarily finding a synthesis, as we saw in our discussion in Chapter 3 of the simul iustus et peccator. However, Luther did attempt to find a way to maintain the distinction and unity between the operations of the two governments by widening the definition of what it meant for secular rulers to “secure peace.”<sup>323</sup> Luther began arguing that public unity in religion was pivotal, because peace and order were threatened by both

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<sup>318</sup> James M. Estes, *Peace, Order and the Glory of God* (Boston, USA, 2005, Brill), 54.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>322</sup> “To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate,” transl. Alfred von Rohr Sauer. *Luther’s Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Volume 44, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955), 158.

<sup>323</sup> Estes, *Peace Order and the Glory of God*, 45.

false religion and disunity in religious matters.<sup>324</sup> Initially, Luther wanted to be able to allow some freedom for churches to choose their own ceremonies, for example, but then decided that this freedom could be exercised only at the territorial level, to ensure order.<sup>325</sup> It soon became clear that Luther's initial demand for a sharp distinction between "matters of the soul" and "earthly matters," between church and government, could not be realized, in part for theological reasons and in part because of his need for continual assistance from secular authorities.<sup>326</sup>

This of course meant that Luther had, at the expense of "matters of the soul," expanded the sphere and importance of "earthly matters." That is to say, in order to ensure peace in earthly matters, Luther had to shrink people's autonomy or self-determination in matters of the soul, to use his terminology. And this Luther did by granting people nothing beyond the space of their own subjectivity in matters of the soul.<sup>327</sup> But this developing tendency within Luther's thought to make matters of the soul an issue of peace in earthly matters was to receive a very strong challenge. This challenge came from Luther's contemporary, an educated man with evangelical views and a humanist background called Georg Frölich. Frölich worked for the city chancellery in Nurnberg, Germany, and decided to write a little memorandum concerning religion and government which he then passed on to his supervisors.<sup>328</sup> There he took Luther's two-government schema and followed it to a different conclusion. Frölich emphasized that Luther's understanding of spiritual government, which is concerned with matters of the soul, should include not just the inner realm of faith and conscience but all the external aspects of religion, particularly preaching and worship.<sup>329</sup>

Frölich's argument was supported to some degree by his claim that, according to Luther's *Letter to the Princes of Saxony Concerning the Rebellious Spirit*, governments should have the authority to punish the wicked men found in all the faith communities, and that false teaching should be countered only by the word of God. However, a greater part of Frölich's argument against the importance of

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., 44–45,

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>327</sup> Martin Luther, "On Secular Authority," 26.

<sup>328</sup> Estes, *Peace Order and the Glory of God*, 102.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

conformity in matters of preaching and worship was empirical rather than theological. He simply pointed to the kingdom of Bohemia where Catholics, Hussites, Bohemian Brethren and a substantial Jewish community lived together and managed well to uphold peace and order.<sup>330</sup> Fröhlich asked, straightforwardly, why this should be any different in other chiefdoms. Fröhlich wrote that one should not fear the coexistence of many confessions but rather a world in which “the strongest will teach his doctrine to others” as that will spur torture, executions and other kinds of violence within or between states.<sup>331</sup> In other words, contra to Luther’s new insistence, the demand for unity in religious matters was a threat to bodily peace, not its guardian.

However tension-ridden Luther’s writings on theology and politics may seem, it must be affirmed that, like Augustine, Luther did offer helpful guiding principles for distinctions, boundaries and spheres. And, again like Augustine, he was not ready to sever temporal authorities completely, or to regard them as autonomous. In this sense, Luther gives a particularly strong expression of the same tendency we have seen in Augustine—the tendency to affirm a distinction between the spiritual and temporal authorities and yet to affirm some type of unity or dynamic between them in the next breath. The only problem is that both Augustine and Luther do this without helping their reader make sense of how these two principles work or relate together, which they just might. The spheres and spaces they draw out are, in the end, not fully effective in mediating a dynamic between love and temporal authorities while also sustaining their distinction. They are, in the end, able to consistently maintain only the space for bodily peace.

But someone might want to enquire about the concept of *the estates* for Luther. Is the doctrine of the estates not an example of spaces within which love operates? And is it not, therefore, essentially the same notion as the one introduced in this thesis?

It is true that love lies at the centre of Luther’s doctrine of the estates. It is also true that the estates name certain social spaces within which love is active. As Oswald Bayer writes on the Lutheran doctrine of the estates: “Love is indeed itself the formative power, but it operates, according to this tradition, within a space that is

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<sup>330</sup> Ibid., 102–103.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 103.

already formed.”<sup>332</sup> Luther determines these estates, or spaces, to be the household, the church and the government, although the terminology varies.<sup>333</sup> According to Luther’s schema, love operates within these stations and therefore Christian discipleship is active within them. But it should be clear that these stations have little to do with the spaces that we have discussed here. Here we are trying to understand the dynamic between love and the structures of temporal authorities, not where love operates universally. Indeed, even if we were to affirm Luther’s distinctions it would still remain a momentous question for the thesis how one should describe the interaction of the estate of the church and the estate of government. Therefore, the estates, while interesting, have little or no bearing on or even similarity to what we are doing with its notion of love and temporal justice that are mediated by spaces. It is one thing to state that love has no boundaries and is therefore active within any and every sphere, but the burning question remains unanswered: What is the interaction between the faith and love of the church and the justice of temporal authorities? Luther attempted to make sense of that question with his theory of the two governments but, as we have seen, while it remains a valuable milestone in the history of ideas, it takes us only so far.

Oliver O’Donovan sees the shortcomings of the Lutheran doctrine of the estates and offers instead his own understanding of the social spheres.<sup>334</sup> He even employs the concepts of space and place which naturally draws our attention. Still, O’Donovan employs the notions of space and place a bit differently and for slightly different ends. In one part of a chapter called “communication” O’Donovan seeks an account of the social whole, “especially an account of what makes them concrete, particular and plural, in contrast to the *universal* fellowship of the human race.” When O’Donovan asks, “How are we to understand the concreteness of particular societies?” he himself answers by saying: “By identifying them in terms of the *place* in which they are situated: Place is the social communication of space.”<sup>335</sup> This is how, instead of marking out special estates, as Luther did, O’Donovan makes matters more fluid and situates communication as the central criterion that determines the

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<sup>332</sup> Oswald Bayer, “Nature and Institution: Luther’s doctrine of the three estates,” in *Freedom in Response* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 101.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>334</sup> O’Donovan, *Ways of judgment*, 254.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*, 255.



boundaries of spheres. So what determines a place is the social communication of space. And place is, in O'Donovan's words, "the determinant of society."<sup>336</sup> That is to say, "place is an abstract concept"<sup>337</sup> that "stands for a totality of diverse communications."<sup>338</sup>

So, here we have one of the thesis's interlocutors employing the concepts of place and space in ways that might appear not to be uncongenial to our argument. Nonetheless, there are important differences. The present work, in line with the architectural discussion, sees place as a signifier for a community's realized colonization of a space. O'Donovan sees place as the determinant of society. But in our view, something like a society is what takes form in the communication between places, in the plural. So, O'Donovan's focus in using the concepts of space and place gives an account of society, making sense of societies as particular and universal at the same time,<sup>339</sup> a different problematic from the one we are addressing which regards the relationship between the collectives of love and the justice of temporal authorities. But these points need not be uncongenial to one another. A connection could be drawn between the two treatments but they do not treat the same problematic, in very much the way in which the Lutheran doctrine of the estates would not interfere with our objective to inquire into the dynamic between church and temporal authorities. However, when it comes to the question regarding the relationship between love and temporal justice, O'Donovan is heading in a similar direction as the present thesis, and speaking the same language.

According to O'Donovan, the reaction of temporal authorities to the love of the church can take place in twofold form. First, the justice of temporal authorities begins taking shape from the Gospel message and, according to O'Donovan, this is seen primarily in increased mercy in temporal judgments as well as greater humility of temporal authorities in light of their received knowledge of God's ultimate judgment.<sup>340</sup> Secondly, O'Donovan thinks it important that temporal authorities react to the Christian Gospel in such a way that it may self-consciously identify itself as

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<sup>336</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>340</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 256–61. It would still be helpful if there was included a more extensive account of how temporal justice is shaped by the church apart from the notion of love as mercy.

Christian. How else could the state be shaped by the Christian idea of justice if not for having received the truth of the proclamation that sustains that idea of justice? Is it not just a question of the integrity of the state to recognize its indebtedness to a specific confession over others?<sup>341</sup> Standing on this ground, O'Donovan does not shy away from the obvious inference that a dynamic should be in place between love and the justice of temporal authorities. Being sceptical of both clean-cut boundaries and open hostilities between the two, O'Donovan confidently claims that the justice of temporal authorities must react to the activity of Christian love. It is a position which is strongly supported by this thesis. However, we must say that, following such statements, there remains much to be said concerning this relationship.

What, for example, is the process of love's shaping justice? Where does it end, and by what criteria? Is there a criterion for political engagement with love? Is there a justice peculiar to temporal authorities which has a relationship to love and is differs from that of general justice? In what way might it be different? Such are the types of questions towards which we are aiming and the concept of space, as outlined above, helps in discovering such answers. This is not to say that O'Donovan has not concretized his understanding of the relationship between love and temporal justice. He has, for example, helpfully written on issues of justice that do concretize his vision in a way that shows how his understanding of the dynamic between love and justice plays out.

We find a good example of this when he writes on the death penalty. In writing on the death penalty, O'Donovan describes historical conditions within which we find ourselves and which determine what people understand to be the content and priorities of justice as well as fitting punishment for injustice: "Societies feel differently about different things. Some are more sensitive to physical injury or death, others to social humiliation. And these differing sensibilities are themselves not arbitrary, but are shaped by the practical possibilities available for punishment and the expectations of life shaped by daily experience."<sup>342</sup> O'Donovan takes the example that "mild practices of punishment presuppose certain virtues of restraint" in

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<sup>341</sup> O'Donovan brings the question to Karl Barth on the topic of the state's witness to Christ's rule: How can it witness to what it has not heard? See O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 213. This is something that will be brought up below.

<sup>342</sup> Oliver O'Donovan, "Todesstrafe," trans. Gerhard Müller, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 33 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 639-646. Using the author's English text, 6.

a people. Likewise, “a disposition in society to immoderate anger and revenge will create a pressure for harsher forms of punishment.”<sup>343</sup> Therefore, the idea of justice varies with each scenario and the possibilities of mercy and mildness must to a certain extent be adjusted to this. However, the dynamic is there. This is seen, for example, in Pope John Paul II’s argument for great leniency with regard to the death penalty, although he did not call for complete abolishment. O’Donovan explains how this utterance of the pope is to be understood as fitting within the public context of the modern “historical possibilities within which we find ourselves.”<sup>344</sup>

In each judgment, therefore, an interaction takes place between love and justice in a historical situation, ever creating a new public context, a new historical condition and possibility, according to O’Donovan.<sup>345</sup> This underlines the possibilities for love in addressing this justice, restraining it and softening it, without suspending it. Without the ultimate suspension of justice, justice can be moderated to a considerable degree, depending upon the public, cultural context. This is all very helpful. O’Donovan’s concrete example of the death penalty does underline the dynamic between love (expressed as mercy) and justice. And it is one to which we can subscribe. In addition, we would like to do two things: i) gain an even wider scope, by offering an account of love that includes more than mercy in interaction with temporal justice, and ii) develop additional guiding criteria for political action and judgment as regards the relationship between love and temporal justice. This we will do in the coming chapter.

In the present chapter it has been argued that the concepts of judgment and affirmation function differently with reference to temporal authorities than they do with reference to other realities. We have discovered that there is a prescribed role for temporal authorities that has a reference to sin and disorder and other actualities which threaten the actualization of love. In the eschaton, as will be understood, there will be no such destructive manifestations and, therefore, no rationale for the legislations, enforcements, taxations, policing, and so on provided by temporal authorities. Indeed, this is why they are rightly called temporal authorities, in that they are meant only for the time being, to serve the actualization of love and justice.

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>345</sup> O’Donovan, *The Ways of Judgment*, 9–10.

Moreover, the concept of space appeared as a helpful concept for conceptually mediating the relationship that temporal justice has to love. It was discovered that love does not become justice but that they are, nonetheless, not in a static relationship. Rather, temporal justice is the space which allows love to actualize and therefore has a vocation only as long as love's actualization is threatened by sin and disorder. Therefore, temporal justice has a reactive relationship to love and justice and is shaped by interaction with love and justice. Following this constructive work, we have traced a trajectory within the history of theology along which we could see similar or congenial understandings struggling to emerge.

With this established, let us get to the work of developing additional criteria for political judgment as it relates to love and temporal justice.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Criteria of Interaction**

As has been stated, we have supported the agenda of this thesis with the contention that its conversation partners have either given problematic descriptions of love and temporal justice or have yet to provide criteria to determine the balance in the interrelationship between the two. But at this point would it perhaps be fair to turn the tables on our own argument? By this we mean that it is time that this thesis bring its own charge upon itself and ask itself directly: what are the criteria which should guide the interrelationship between love and temporal justice? It has surely been clearly argued and stated that temporal justice is the space in which loving justice can actualize. But we need to know concerning this space how far, and in what aspects, love can shape it. And we need to understand what criteria should guide political action and judgment.

Therefore, in this chapter we will learn of the criteria, the limits and allowances that determine how love shapes the spaces of temporal justice. This will entail discussing the basic criteria for political action and political judgment. We will look first to see how far love can go in shaping the spaces of temporal justice. We will investigate relevant domains of human existence and seek to discover when the space of temporal justice is “over-determined.” Next we will seek to describe the conditions of political judgment and discover that it functions according to a dual criterion which is able to include the particular judgments of those who wield political power.

#### **A. Love and the Spaces of Temporal Justice**

We have argued that love should be given space, that this is the nature of the function of temporal justice. But it should be obvious that when love of a certain type is given increased space or space of a certain kind, it might very often mean restricting the movements of other types of love. When American public space was reconfigured following the civil rights movement, it opened up (as has been argued) suggestive spaces within which cross-racial love could potentially actualize. However, at the

same time, although no one was forced to love a certain way, the spaces opened for the expression of love of particularity in terms of race (racist ideology) was shrunk to a definite extent. One could no longer create public spaces that allowed entry only to people of certain races. So, while loves/beliefs/values of a certain kind were not banned or forced they were given restricted space. Granting space to one form of love came at the expense of another. This is a very important point to remember as one might be tempted to see the process of “space granting” as completely without infringement or injury to other forms of love. To the contrary, it offers a way to conceptualize a very real struggle in which love always engages, in a way that helps the subjects of love be clearer about the nature of their engagement with temporal justice.

Why does love include struggle? Love, as we explained in earlier chapters, is born out of perceptions of a faith which sees the true potentiality of human beings and all of reality. There is, therefore, always a truth-contention built into love. Love struggles for the *truth* of its object, for its object to become fully known and for itself to actualize in accordance with the truth perceived. Love, therefore, has a contested and a contesting nature because of its relation to truth. This is further amplified by the fact that love is an actualization process involving the potentiality it perceives in faith and it takes on shapes, activities and social organization that require space, which might not always be readily available.

We must therefore ask ourselves: When a form of love reaches a special type of prominence, distribution and audience, how far can it press for space and at what point, and by what criteria, might it reach a limit? And now, we should ask this question in full understanding that the granting of a certain space to a type of love might restrict the space for movements of other types of love.

There are a several types of spaces or venues within which a limit to love could possibly be drawn. The schema of such spatial types could look the following way: First, there is the *inner belief* of a subject, obviously referring to inner dispositions, thoroughly known only by the subject. Second, there is *expressed belief*, including both speech and symbolic action performed to advocate the love/belief/value in question. Third, we find *public belief*, the aggregate response to expressed belief, sometimes solidifying as a majority consensus. Fourth there is

*institutionalized belief*, which refers to the identitarian aspect of the state. Institutionalized belief and the identitarian aspects of the state determine the degree to which temporal authorities accept a self-understanding derived from certain loves/beliefs/values and codify these in its constitutions or laws.

### ***i. Inner Belief***

If we begin with the first category, *inner belief*, it seems that there is something very minimalistic about granting people the space of their own subjectivity. If “the fool says in his heart ‘there is no God,’” how will his belief be changed by forms other than preaching and rational persuasion? How can one fail to grant people the space of their own subjectivity? Martin Luther wrote of those who engaged in physical forcing of belief:

Those blind and wretched people do not realize what a pointless and impossible thing they are attempting. However strict their order, and however much they rage, they cannot force people to do more than obey by word and [outward] deed. . . . All they achieve is to force people with weak consciences to perjure themselves, saying one thing while in their hearts they believe another. . . . It would be much easier, although it may mean allowing their subjects to fall into error, just to let them err, rather than to force them to lie and profess [with their mouths] what they do not believe in their hearts.<sup>346</sup>

This passage portrays a longstanding concern of protestant Christianity, and its philosophical progeny, to be critical of the value of those actions that are done without the right intention in mind. It is especially this that is at stake in Luther’s words. Those very familiar with the political history of the Protestant Reformation might be surprised by the quoted passage, knowing that Luther did, in fact, advocate constraints on the actions of many dissidents. The important thing to note on that point is the rationale which guided Luther. Luther was ready to constrain actions primarily in the name of order and conformity rather than as the endorsement of orthodoxy.<sup>347</sup> For orthodoxy would not be orthodoxy without being a *free* response to

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<sup>346</sup> Martin Luther, “On Secular Authority,” 26.

<sup>347</sup> James M. Estes recounts how some Roman Catholics challenged Martin Luther on his own grounds when the Reformation became an agenda enforced by temporal authorities. They read through Luther’s work and told the reformers that, according to themselves, one should not physically force faith. To this Luther responded that public unity in religion was pivotal because peace and order were threatened by disunity in religious matters. See Estes, *Peace Order and the Glory of God*, 44–47.

the persuasion of the Gospel. The question for us should not, therefore, be whether people should be granted the space of their own subjectivity for their own beliefs, but whether that is *all* that should be granted to them. It is very obvious that banning expressions and actions related to beliefs of certain kinds can, over a long period of time, be detrimental to the survival and thriving of the beliefs in question. This remains true even if the expressed intention of authorities is only to maintain order and conformity to sustain peace. So, the idea of subjective belief being given its space is as obvious as it is insufficient on its own. It shows us that the second category of *expressed belief* is also a highly relevant category when juxtaposed with our first category of inner belief. Finding that to be the case moves us to investigate the space for expressed belief and discover whether there are any limitations that could be legitimately drawn there.

## ***ii. Expressed Belief***

The category of expressed belief concerns itself with advocacy of love/belief/value by way of speech or act. Unlike the category of inner belief, this category refers to expressions within social reality. But why should there be any such possibility of any type or form? The obvious answer is that, without it, there would be no possibility for the actualization of *true love* apart from direct disobedience and law-breaking. It is true that someone could possibly want to say that the process that moves towards legitimacy should always be a movement begun in the domain of the illegitimate. But that is a very self-contradicting notion. Creating, or imagining, a process of space creation that has law-breaking written into it runs against the very rationale of law-making. The process of legitimacy is self-contradictory if it is a process that requires illegitimate actions to actualize legitimacy. There needs to be some space available for the love in question. At the same time, the space given for *expressed belief* does not have to be great. But it must be a space for proclaiming or campaigning in some form, by some type of (restrained) speech or symbolic act. This is important. Notice that in the previous sentence it is indicated that speech and act can be qualified by the word “restrained.” It should already be clear that love can, within the realm of possibility delineated in this thesis, have a very extensive vocation in writing prescriptions into temporal authorities when creating their laws



and institutions. It can seek to restrain speech and it can seek to restrain symbolic action. But love's shaping of temporal authorities cannot go so far that it becomes over-determining in a way that goes beyond suggestive space and in a way that gives the other form of love in question no room to move or actualize itself publicly.

The question about *expressed belief* is therefore the pivotal point in our questioning where granting space to love ends and by what criteria. It is, therefore, also primarily here that our question as to when space has become positive, over-determined space is answered. The answer is: *When it does not force belief* but only accommodates belief in such a way that certain beliefs and behaviours are suggested, made more sensible within the public space. This means that *the forcing of belief* has become the token of what temporal authorities are requested to refrain from while "belief forcing" is very minimally defined to the extent that structures can still favour and guide belief towards certain loves/beliefs/values or behaviour without transgressing. As has now been said, this can be so even to the degree that certain types of dissent are made difficult to some extent. In the end, there can be no forcing of belief, and yet, (and importantly) there can be forcing of behaviour associated with that belief, but only suggestively, not in a way that is over-determining of love. Acted belief (expression in non-verbal act) *can*, therefore, be curbed and muted to the ultimate degree although there would rarely be proper occasions for this. Nonetheless, we do have very clear examples of this in modern times. NAMBLA (North-American Man-Boy Love Association), for example, is a community which has only a very limited type of space for expression, and zero space for acting out their idea of love.

This may still, despite being plainly spoken, sound as vague as it sounds shocking. The reason for the remaining vagueness is, at this point, that we are still waiting for a clarification as to how we can identify whether over-determination is taking place. How do we identify this "over-determination"? What questions need to be asked to determine whether over-determination is taking place? The answer lies in the following question: *Is there a possibility for a subjective rejection (in inner belief) followed by some type of speech or action that defies the inner logic of the suggestive structures (in expressed belief)?* If there is one or both of these lacking, then the space created is over-determined.

How can this be affirmed and what justifies this judgment that such an inner belief, combined with speech or symbolic action, is required not prevent space from becoming over-determined? The reason is that if it were not for this type of space then, hypothetically, the truest form of love could be barred from the political process entirely, meaning that the truest form of love would have no means by which to actualize. This point is both clear and important. But perhaps someone would want to challenge it by asking why that would be a problem. Are not some pursuits morally reprehensible and unfit to see the light of day, for example thievery? Here it must be stated that nothing that has been written here suggests that thievery, or similar activities, cannot or should not be banned. But if someone wants to become an advocate of thievery as a worthwhile pursuit, this should, according to what has been argued here, be given some type of space. Now, this type of space does not have to be much and can even be greatly curbed. But nonetheless, it ought to be there in some form or another.

This is not to say that thievery cannot be judged and legislated against by the temporal authorities. It can and most likely will. But in our meta-analysis here, there is no evaluation made of particular value judgments that will be made by temporal authorities in the actual act of judgment. That part of the process, the actual act of judgment, will be explained with the dual criterion of political judgment below. At this point we are concerned primarily with more general criteria which cannot be designed to exclude the *true* manifestation of love when it appears. After all, this has been deemed to be the role of temporal justice, to be the space which allows love to actualize. Importantly, these general criteria will be active within the dual criterion of political judgment, but they will not be the *only* criteria.

It goes without saying that the extent and type of determination permissible depends upon the issue in question which makes it necessary to treat each issue judiciously but, in part, according to the criteria now sketched out. This is what explains why there cannot be given any more concrete ways or “a method” with which to evaluate the public expression of love according to general criteria. Because once the meta-criteria for temporal authorities are established and an actual political judgment is to be made, the particular value judgments of temporal authorities become operative in the equation, determining spaces.

What has been written plainly here might appear, for example to those with strong liberal sensitivities, as quite shocking. It might seem that love's vocation is rather grand and far-reaching, possibly too oppressive. But here it is important to note that what has been described is how far love's vocation *can* reach without offending the frameworks and structure of our thesis. It is not a description of what love's vocation *should be* but what it *can be* without becoming offensive by some irreducible criteria. We have to remember how we described the nature of love earlier in the thesis. Loving actions are based on extensive guesswork concerning that which they hope to accomplish. What has been established here concerning love does not mean that a Christian cannot come to his (non-theological) conclusion that a Republican agenda (or the agenda of any other political tradition) might be the best long-time arrangement for the actualization of love. It does, however, mean that there is a dynamic between love and temporal justice and that this dynamic has an upper and a lower mark. There is no such thing as a non-relationship between love and temporal justice. What has been shown is that this relationship is real and necessary so long as there is both love and temporal justice to be found at all. At the same time there is a limit to the determinations love can make of temporal justice in that some form of expression, by word or deed, must be possible for the form of love in question.

We must also be clear that although the limits of love have been sketched out this way, the notion of "space for love" suggests a process that, in its basis, is not predatory on other forms of love. Space is not, in its essence, an infringing phenomenon. It is infringing only in those instances in which the space of one cannot be had without shrinking the space of another. And this is not the governing aspect of space. A space can surely develop in such a way, becoming ever more suggestive and thereby ever more determining of other spaces.

An example from Iceland clearly illustrates such a development. In Iceland, homosexual love has, within the last century, received ever more space and actualization. Homosexual activity was decriminalized in 1940, anti-discrimination and same-sex partnerships were achieved in 1996, adoptions by same-sex couples were allowed in 2006, and in 2010 same-sex marriage was made possible. As can be seen, things have changed rapidly. So rapidly indeed that now, in 2012, a case has

come up in which a teacher in a public school has been removed from his position for publicly (but outside the classroom) espousing views that homosexuality is not a good form of love. This is how, as the loves and beliefs of the homosexual movement have sought changes to temporal justice to accommodate their form of love, the structures have become ever more infringing upon the space of others. In this case mentioned, they have maximized the possible movements of love entering the realm of *expressed belief*.

In this thesis we have surely established that love does indeed have the vocation of seeking space and that this can be a deeply determining space, even to the degree of limiting act and speech to some extent—as can be seen by the limit that is, evidently, placed on teachers in public schools in Iceland. But this is not at all a necessary demand to be made by love. That love has, in the example from Iceland, decided to shape temporal justice to the maximum of its possibility is not the lesson one should take from our thesis about creating and sustaining space. In fact, the present thesis indicates instead, without necessitating it, a form of co-existence of spaces and the organic colonization of these spaces by collectives. Movements and collectives that make it their sole agenda to restructure temporal justice do not have the focus of love in the right place. Love is found most pre-eminently in its own actualization, in its organic colonization of spaces, the development of an authentic moral community of love. Those who would take the thesis of the relationship between love and temporal justice as space facilitation and turn it into a program for the colonization of the structures of temporal authorities have failed to follow the internal logic of this thesis.

The internal logic of the thesis is that the actualization of love is primary and is found with the agents of love and the collective/movement of love, not in the constant, frustrated rearrangement of temporal authorities. Those changes should come as an afterthought, a secondary aspect. They should come as naturally as when a child requires new shoes when it has grown out of its older pair. The logical priority is not on temporal authorities, the logical priority is on the moral community, the collective of love to which temporal authorities are responsive in varying degrees. So, although saying that expressed belief and love can be curbed, both as speech and symbolic actions, is saying something important and true, it is not saying

all that much. Minimums and maximums are important markers to know and keep. But the tendency to keep one's gaze fixed on those can easily lead one to betray the inner logic of that of which they are the upper and lower limits.

### ***iii. Public Belief***

Out of the degree of success attained by expressed belief and love, there emerges something like a societal consensus of some kind concerning a host of issues. Something like a public belief gradually takes form. Public belief is, in large degree, a result of successful expressed belief/love. It is a form of majoritarian consensus that tends to develop in societies over time. This public belief that takes shape in societies further affects political structures and political decisions. However, as we are inquiring into the possible limits that could be placed on love in its public interactions we cannot say that there is much that needs to be said that warrants specifically treating public belief. Public belief cannot have any type of limit placed upon it as it is the aggregate reaction to expressed belief, not a phenomenon with a single agent that could be addressed, curbed or limited by temporal authorities. However, public belief needs to be mentioned, since what emerges from the success of expressed belief/love and its subsequent consensus of public belief is the possibility of an identitarian state.

### ***iv. The Identitarian State***

Lastly, there is the very interesting question of the identitarian state, referring to the degree to which public self-understanding is codified in laws, constitutions and institutions. Many of the world's constitutions and laws do, in fact, refer to God, the church or Christianity in one way or another. Yet, within the parameters of the current thesis we do not find there to be any *demand* on the part of political theology that temporal authorities receive such a distinct Christian self-understanding. A solid theological argument has nonetheless been brought forth on that issue. It argues that the state witnesses to Christ and that it cannot witness to that which it has not heard.<sup>348</sup> It should then follow that, if the state is to be a witness to Christ, it must

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<sup>348</sup> O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, 213.

know of itself as this witness. By this it is meant that, primarily, witnessing is a knowing reaction to a truth, expressed in deliberately and self-knowingly acknowledging and pointing to a truth.

The logic of this reasoning is tempting but it is, nonetheless, not built on necessary deductions. Even though Pilate did not recognize the authority of God and asked Jesus agnostically, “what is truth,” it remained the case that Jesus said that all of Pilate’s power was “given from above.” Whether Pilate knows or not, Christians will know and understand that he lives, works and rules only by the grace of God. He witnesses to the sovereignty and grace of God, willingly or not. No epistemological position is necessary on Pilate’s part for this to be accomplished. Now, if one were discussing the possibility of Pilate’s being a more direct witness, someone who recognizes the truth of the Gospel, that surely would be an open possibility, theologically speaking. But this possibility does not constitute any theological necessity or demand that we can see. Likewise, as we know that there are countless other possibilities of identitarian forms of state, it must be said that the same applies in such cases. There can be ethnic identities as well as religious, secular, liberal, and any number of other identities. However, there is no theological necessity for a *tout court* rejection of such identitarian authorities. This is not to say that there might be no good reasons for maintaining/opposing an identitarian temporal authority/state. But it likely means that any reason for an identitarian state must rather be of a primarily practical kind and therefore extra-theological.

Someone might be confused by this. One might want to ask whether it is not obvious that an identitarian state would strengthen/threaten one confession/identity over another. And, if so, will it not be an obvious theological request that a Christian, identitarian, state be sought and any other resisted? The issue remains a matter of some debate. Within some Anabaptist circles it is a longstanding contention that the intermingling of Christian belief with the state risks a form of idolatry or corruption. But let us explore and imagine that it would, indeed, strengthen the position of the confession in question for it to be represented in the identitarian aspects of the state. Could we then resist the temptation to request from the state that it identify itself with one confession over another? Probably not. And it would not be contrary to the political theology of the current thesis if someone wanted to follow such a line of

thought. That much can be said. But the question as to whether such a campaign will help the cause of love will remain the important debate and it is *not a theological one*, at least it does not take place in the first tier of theological reasoning.

That is not to say, however, that there are no theological touchpoints with the concept of the identitarian state. We could still theologically ask (given that such an identitarian process is legitimated and sought) whether such a process would have a theologically drawn upper limit. Is there any line to be drawn, theologically, in the way in which one confession is supported over others in the identitarian aspects of the state? The answer is “yes” and is based on what has already been established concerning the distinction between love and temporal justice. Just as love must, in humility, not pretend to achieve the freedom it seeks, so the state must not pretend to achieve the church’s vocation to preach and love according to the Gospel. Temporal justice takes shape from love’s movements but it does not seek to move like love. Temporal justice creates space for love and this space can be either a limited or a strongly suggestive space. This limit of the identitarian state is, in the end, determined by the limits already discussed in the categories of *inner* and *expressed* belief/love/values.

## **B. Overcoming the Binaries**

At this point a clearer picture of the relationship between love and temporal justice has emerged. Yet there will, undoubtedly, remain a request for greater clarification, greater concretization, or additional examples illustrating how the process might look when applied to one current issue or another. Nonetheless, the conceptual tools needed for engagement have already been explained and they should be ready to be applied.

That the continual request for greater clarification and concretization remains is understandable and is likely due to common habits of thought that will be hard to break. Often it will take time to re-adjust and become familiar with thinking on the terms of a new perspective. Our minds, at least in the Western world, seem to be shaped by a very distinctive form of binary thinking concerning the relationship between love and justice, beliefs and government, religion and politics. Opinions seem to vacillate between the idea of a privileged dynamic relating a single idea of

love to temporal justice and a public square bereft of any such relationship. Although tides may be turning in certain academic circles, it seems that the pluralistic situation suggests to most minds that there is a binary choice between “one idea of love interacting with temporal justice” or “no interaction at all.” Between the two, the option of “no interaction at all” is commonly seen as the fairest response. If we are correct in assuming that common thinking in the West defaults to the idea of “no interaction,” we should confidently point out that this ignores the fact that temporal justice receives its shape and determination only from love.

### ***i. Symptomatic of the Binary***

As this thesis was being written, a very symptomatic issue arose at the University of Iceland. There, intelligent people with good intentions attempted to address an occurrence that is fairly typical of the increasingly pluralistic age in which we live. Like many universities in the Western world, the University of Iceland is shaped by the Christian faith in more than one way. One very concrete way in which this influence is noticeable is the small chapel that is located in the main university building. In recent years, however, the diversity of students in the University of Iceland has increased, including an increase in Muslim students. As Muslim student numbers increased they organized themselves and formally requested space within the university where they could pray during the day as Muslims are wont to do. Space is, however, somewhat scarce at the university but a temporary solution was found, allowing Muslim students to use the chapel during Ramadan. It was obviously a temporary solution because the chapel is very clearly a Christian place of worship and neither of the two groups, Christians and Muslims, found this to be an ideal long-term arrangement.

That is when the University of Iceland did a very peculiar thing, or so it seems from our perspective. They found a small room where Muslims in the student body could pray and worship. However, it was strangely added that this room would not be for Muslims only but would be “a neutral prayer-room” for every religious persuasion under the sun! The public reaction was frustration, but the frustration was divided between dissatisfaction with giving Muslims any space at all and frustration that Christians still enjoyed the privilege of a chapel within the university. But there



was no noticeable public bewilderment at the strange action of the University of Iceland to respond to the specific, Muslim request for space for prayer with a “neutral prayer-room for all religions.” Nobody asked about the origins of this idea of “all persuasions being cast into a single, uniform, space.”

One must ask why the University of Iceland made such a decision. Muslims within the student body made a concrete request for space within the university area. How did the relevant university authorities react? In one broad sweep those in charge were going to tackle the complicated web of multicultural society: Every religious group, apart from Christians, was to share one room! Somewhere along the way, however, the relevant authorities forgot to ask whether anyone else had requested space with good reason, such as the Muslims had. No other groups had. The decision revealed clearly how greatly our minds tend to think in binary opposition. The former polarity is that only *one* faith community gets to shape society and its institutions (“Only a Christian chapel and no space for Muslim religiosity!”). The latter is that *no* faith community is to enjoy any treatment that is not simultaneously granted to every other faith community (“No privilege for the Christian faith!”).

Yet these are not the positions to which we must default. The truth is that there is, strictly speaking, *no privilege* in the relationship between love and temporal justice. But, from the position of *no privilege*, a position of privilege always develops for one idea of love or another. By this we mean that no matter the ground-level point we seem always to attempt to imagine, against all odds and where no single idea of love holds sway, that temporal structures must be given a certain shape. And there is no possibility that structures of justice can be shaped by nothing. Love actualizes and temporal justice receives a determination from love’s movements. In the domain of temporal authorities it is, as we have already extensively argued, love that shapes and determines structures of temporal justice. Even from the imaginary point of shapeless temporal structures where there is no privilege for one idea of love over another, every determination by agents of love or agents of temporal authorities delivers a privilege for one idea of love over another.

## ***ii. Overcoming the Binaries of the Language of Rights***

Nevertheless, former polarities remain habits of thought and old habits die hard. This particular habit is, in the modern West, reinforced even more by the uncompromising and prevalent nature of the language of rights, what can be called “rights language,” which is often disassociated from potentiality and love.

Merely stating this might, of course, raise the question as to what the place of “rights language” is in relation to the argument of the present thesis. The question of rights is, however, not of primary concern here. One must, in a sense, choose one’s battles and exploring “rights” would put us on highly contested ground. Furthermore, we are already tackling a major issue in addressing the relationship between love and justice. Nevertheless, because of the prevalence of the concept of rights and its strong association with the concept of justice, we feel compelled to adumbrate its possible place in relation to our central contentions. Following the logic of the present work, and agreeing with Grotius, we can say that the concept of right, or of *a* right, in the strict sense, refers to actuality more than potentiality. Right belongs to justice as the concept that denotes judgments and actions that refer primarily to actuality. That is to say: rights belong to justice, which looks primarily to safeguard such things that exist and are judged to have a part in the future of potentiality. Speaking of rights in this regard points to those things one understands to be essential to the safeguarding of actuality. In a sense, rights language is explorative (although often declarative in expression), seeking to determine a “canon” of justice, a measuring stick determining what counts among the basic demands of justice, and what is due in general and specific instances, respectively. However, importantly, we are here speaking about justice and rights in the general, first-order sense, not as a concept belonging to temporal authorities. In effect, as with the concept of justice, we must say that the concept of rights has two functions: i) general function and ii) as a function in which it applies to temporal authorities.

As the discussion of rights arises from the general account of justice it assumes one of two shapes. First, it takes shape as the question about whether something is due to one or another. Second, it can take the shape of an attempt, as has been observed, to discern “a canon” for the work of justice, a kind of measuring stick as to the kind of things that must be especially safeguarded. In application to

temporal authorities, rights are a different affair in that they are, simply, whatever is prescribed by law. This law, of course, is made and shaped in dialogue with loving-justice (as is the nature of temporal justice), which includes the first-order discussion of rights just mentioned. However, a similar type of “canon-discussion” occurs within the domain of temporal authorities to determine those positivistic rights that are to be viewed as of particular importance. These two orders of rights language or discourse, general and temporal, can easily be correlated but they cannot be divorced from their original setting in which they are, on the one hand, embedded in a coherent notion of loving justice and, on the other hand, function in the general service of loving-justice within the domain of temporal authorities.

If the concept of right is both disassociated from general justice and said not to be determined by the logic of temporal authorities, then we have moved the concept of rights into the realm of faith, where it occupies the same place as the religions, with a love of its own and a justice of its own. In this instance, rights are not derived from potentiality, love and justice, but take the place of potentiality, love and justice. Now it must be said that such notions of “rights” (e.g., some possible types of “human rights”) is not a very thick notion of potentiality. This is not to say that one cannot hold such an attitude. But to the present thesis rights language must have two orders, one embedded with loving justice, the other embedded in positivist law-making. The two can easily be put in dialogue: the universal, first-order discourse of rights and the temporal, second-order discourse of rights. However, in this correlation there lurks the danger of abandoning the embeddedness of rights in both loving justice and positive law. Without such an embedded discourse, rights language is ripe to lose contact with the wellsprings that originally nourished it, spiral out of control and become a stale self-generation or self-referential talk.

To those with imaginations constrained by the aforementioned categories of dis-embedded rights, however, it might be difficult to conceive, juridically, how any institutional realities might develop wherein “justice as dis-embedded rights” does not always trump love. In the common language of the modern age this would likely be expressed in another vocabulary in which negative individual rights should always trump any notion of positive liberties. In the popular imagination, it could be argued, there is little counter-imagination to the notion that the reality must be a

straightforward trumping of one form of liberty by the other, of dis-embedded right over love. However, even within this problematic rights language, there is an obliterating of negative individual rights by positive right or the dissolution of positive liberty of the collective by negative individual rights. Our juridical conceptions, if shaped in the dis-embedded manner, need not fall either with the modern realities of France or with those of Saudi Arabia. The common language of rights need not be conceptualized in this unfortunate and binary light. As has been pointed out by the prominent jurist Joseph Weiler, Europe is in fact split down the middle between states that can be said to be prone to secularism and states that have an identity more openly shaped by the spiritual values of Christianity.<sup>349</sup>

Weiler has reminded The European Court of Human Rights that there are two fundamental rights at issue, the individual, negative right from religion, and the collective, majority right to self-expression in collective institutions.<sup>350</sup> Both are to be seen as fundamental rights, Weiler claims, as he surveys the constitutional landscape of Europe. And, as fundamental rights, they both need to be taken into account. The fundamental right to collective, indentitarian self-expression cannot default to a tradition/ideal that hopes to exclude traditions/ideals. This would mean that any deliberation would have only one possible outcome and therefore would not be a proper deliberation regarding the issue under discussion. In fact, there is no need to choose between “either France or Saudi Arabia.” Somehow, half of Europe lives under constitutional arrangements that recognize both individual rights over and against religion together with the collective right to self-expression and identitarian institution-building. Falling neither with France nor Saudi Arabia, we find England,

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<sup>349</sup>Weiler claims: “There is a huge diversity of State-Church arrangement in Europe. More than half the population of Europe lives in States which could not be described as *laïque*.” See Joseph Weiler, “Oral Submission by Professor JHH Weiler on Behalf of Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania, Malta, The Russian Federation and San Marino – Third Party Intervening States in the Lautsi Case Before the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights,” *The International Journal of Constitutional Law* 8, no. 2 (2010): 161–166.

<sup>350</sup> Weiler asks: “How does one negotiate the individual and the collective rights at issue here?” Concerning the European Union in particular, he writes: “First, under the Convention system all Members must, indeed, guarantee individuals freedom of religion but also freedom from religion. This obligation represents a common constitutional asset of Europe. It is, however, counter balanced by considerable liberty when it comes to the place of religion or religious heritage in the collective identity of the nation and the symbology of the State.” He then adds: “The Europe of the Convention represents a unique balance between the individual liberty of freedom of and from religion, and the collective liberty to define the State and Nation using religious symbols and even having an established Church.” See *ibid.*, 161–166.

Ireland, Germany, Sweden, Greece, Italy, and others. They represent realities that should help us see that even the prevalence of dis-embedded rights language does not necessitate binary thinking. If we are to have rights language, it would be a benefit to have it without this binary that can lead only to a predetermined outcome.

### **C. Temporal Authorities and Truth Procedure**

Let us now focus on the agents of temporal authorities. They are the ones deliberating, making determinations and judgments, according to the criteria that we have laid out. Still, even with these criteria in hand, it remains to be explained what their relationship is to the truth content of the various ideas of love as seeking actualization and space. In making a judgment or determination, what relationship does the queen, statesman or demos have with the truth-claim that underlies the idea of love that is under political evaluation? It might surely sound to some as if the notion of temporal authorities *reacting to a “collective of love”* is a strongly democratic idea. It might seem to suggest that temporal authorities are only reacting to power in numbers and organization. This would mean that the criteria of the current thesis would be fitting only for democratic arrangements. But this is not the case.

Truth-content is important to those making determinations of temporal justice. That this is the case entails that temporal authorities may run against the majority will, although it will remain true that practical concerns will often guide them to be deeply attentive to the demos. But the important thing to note is that *the final political judgment should not be conflated with a truth-procedure or a truth-event*. The collective of love is the agent and custodian of the truth-event, the idea of love and the executor of the truth-procedure. Temporal authorities will never be agents of capital “T”-truth. They will be, to varying degrees, reactive to capital T-truth but, in being negotiated alongside other concerns, truth will be compromised. The political judgment will certainly be valued by the champions of truth, but will ultimately be judged as a half-truth, if not an outright lie. This indirect relationship between temporal authorities and truth is a very important issue but one that must not be misunderstood.

Again, temporal justice is reactive to love according to two criteria. First, temporal justice reacts to love with reference to its own general nature as temporal justice. Second, it is reactive to the “truth-value” of the specific love in question in the particular event of political judgment. This means that temporal authorities are not an outgrowth of the collective, or an extension of it. They do however provide an important service to it and are not inattentive to truth-value. Temporal justice sustains the space so that the actualization of human potentiality can take place. This process of actualization, this movement, we called by the name of love. The implication is that temporal authorities give service to love, the movement from potentiality to actuality. Temporal justice is one which, indirectly, serves the love and justice of the collective of love. This it does by sustaining the space for truth to be known and enacted. In this process it makes judgments based, first, on this specific role they have as temporal authorities and, second, in respect to what they judge to be the truth-value of that to which they react.

That is to say, first, that there is a primary criterion which is based on the general role of temporal authorities with regards to ideals of love, and, second, a secondary criterion which has to do with the inevitable and necessary estimation and appreciation of the content of the specific ideal of love in question. There is, in effect, a dual criterion at work in political judgment, one practical (looking to the general service that temporal authorities provide) and another which concerns the veracity of the specific ideal of love in question (which makes a specific judgment with regard to a specific ideal of love.) This is not to be confused with the notion of simply making a distinction between metaphysical and empirical judgments. While such a distinction can, undoubtedly, be made, at least in part, our argument is, rather, referring to another, basic disposition in making judgments. In this disposition there is, first, a basic and a primary role which belongs to temporal authorities which then guides their judgment. This basic and primary role is to be in service of love in a general sense, to be reactive to love in a way that makes sure that true manifestations of love will be allowed the possibility of actualizing within the domain of the legitimate (as opposed to moving through illegitimacy to reach legitimacy). In this way the true manifestation of love would always be able to find ways to seek to

colonize spaces and influence the structures of temporal justice to the degree that this is demanded by its internal logic.

Alongside this basic and primary criterion for political judgment we find the secondary criterion, which is the inevitable judgment temporal authorities must make with regard to the veracity of the ideal of love that vies for space at any given time. As temporal justice takes shape from specific ideals of love, it must make judgments with regards to specific ideals of love and this must be done by looking to their internal logic and structures.

This links back to the second chapter, where we discussed the nature of theological rationality as it engages in ethics and politics. There, in relation the process of ethical deliberation and action, we described a two-tiered process.<sup>351</sup> The first tier was described as a meta-analysis which is provisional, but less so than the second tier of ethical and political deliberation. The difference was that the second tier of deliberation brought natural, empirical, and speculative resources of other kinds into the deliberation process, making it even more provisional than the first tier of meta-analysis. In it, it became clear that once a meta-analysis has been achieved one must still deliberate and act within a specific context, and make certain speculative and practical assumptions within that context. And even though our meta-analysis will always remain provisional, it is in this second phase, or tier, of the process that things grow more uncertain. Nonetheless, it is a necessary part of human ethical/political deliberation and action and must be included in every account of it because, although we have established certain meta-criteria for political judgment, this latter part of the deliberation process, wherein specific human beings act within specific contexts, must be taken into account. The dual criterion of judgment therefore both acknowledges and is partly built on the second tier of ethical/political deliberation.

This dual criterion might also be of help in addressing the concerns of those who might hold a strong creation ethic (or even some types of resurrection ethics). These concerns would include the idea that the general, meta-criteria of interaction between love and temporal justice that have been sketched out fail to exclude attitudes that could be considered morally offensive and should, therefore, be off the

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<sup>351</sup> See pages 56–57.

table of political discussion. They might, for example, find it frightening that the criteria seem to allow morally outrageous things, such as “the recreational torture of whales,” to be on the table of political discussion. But here it must be remembered that once actual political judgment takes place, according to the dual criterion, the public expression in favour of the “recreational torture of whales” can be curbed to the highest degree. This means that proponents of “recreational torture of whales” could, for example, be barred from making their case via print media. A similar ban is upheld by law in Iceland regarding the smoking of tobacco, as a case in point which cannot receive a positive appraisal through advertisement or print media.<sup>352</sup> So, although the proponents of “recreational whale torture” should, according to the criteria of temporal justice, be allowed some form of space for the expression of their belief/love, this space can be rendered very slender once an actual political judgment has been made. The dual criterion includes this possibility of near-exclusion because the secondary criterion of political judgment is the truth-commitment or love held by whoever exercises political judgment at any given time. Importantly, however, the general criteria of interaction between love and temporal justice do not, in themselves, include particular judgments regarding particular issues. Otherwise, the true manifestation of love, might, hypothetically, be found to be excluded from the political process, by definition.

In his book, *Law, Morality and Religion in a Secular Society*, Basil Mitchell navigates a very interesting disagreement that can be illuminating for this important point concerning the dual criterion of temporal authorities. The disagreement informs the extended conversation between H. L. A. Hart and Lord Patrick Devlin concerning the relationship between politics and morality.<sup>353</sup> In that conversation Lord Devlin argued for a form of dynamic between morality and politics while Hart had more or less argued against such an understanding. Lord Devlin’s contention was that “without shared ideas on politics, morals, and ethics no society can exist.”<sup>354</sup> Hart agreed but noted that these shared ideas should apply only a minimal restraint from

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<sup>352</sup>The Icelandic Parliament, Althing. *Icelandic Tobacco Prevention Law*, Article 7 of Act 6/2002, See: <http://www.althingi.is/lagas/nuna/2002006.html>.

<sup>353</sup> Basil Mitchell, *Law Morality and Religion in a Secular Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.



inflicting harm,<sup>355</sup> to which Mitchell responded that much enforcement of morals “could also be described as a straightforward case of preventing harm.”<sup>356</sup>

Another difference navigated by Mitchell is that while Hart tended to think there to be some minimal universal restraints that can be discovered and legislated, Lord Devlin disagreed. Lord Devlin maintained that, for practical reasons, a society must legislate morals above the minimal degree of direct physical injury which Hart prefers. Unlike Hart, Lord Devlin did not argue for a universal set of principles but rather maintained that the morality that finds its way to legislation will depend on the society in question. Mitchell’s interpretation of Lord Devlin is the following: “We do not know how much cohesion is necessary for a society to exist, but we know that some cohesion is necessary. Some degree of shared morality is essential to this minimum of cohesion, and any weakening of moral belief may reduce it below this minimum; hence we cannot bind ourselves not to use the law to safeguard existing moral beliefs, no matter how peripheral they may appear to be.”<sup>357</sup> But construing matters in this way entails that it could be said that Lord Devlin sees only one criterion for politics and morality—the survival, peaceableness and order of the society in question:

I have said that a sense of right and wrong is necessary for the life of a community. It is not necessary that their appreciation of right and wrong, tested in the light of one set or another of those abstract propositions about which men forever dispute, should be correct. If it were, only one society at most could survive. What the law-maker has to ascertain is not the true belief but the common belief.<sup>358</sup>

Faced with this Mitchell worries that “we are committed to the view that the positive morality of a given society is beyond criticism. . . . If the test is survival, any surviving society, however unjust, has automatically passed the test.”<sup>359</sup> “But,” adds Mitchell, “mercifully, Lord Devlin is not consistent.”<sup>360</sup> To explain what he means,

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 24. Mitchell further quotes Hart: “The protection of human beings from murder or violence or other forms of injury remains a good whatever the motives are by which others are induced to abstain from these crimes. But where there is no harm to be prevented and no potential victim to be protected, as is often the case where conventional sexual morality is disregarded, it is difficult to understand the assertion that conformity, even if motivated merely by fear of the law’s punishment, is a value worth pursuing, notwithstanding the misery and sacrifice of freedom it involves.” Ibid., 71.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 42.

Mitchell observes that Lord Devlin's writings often introduce the contradictory figure of the "right-minded" man and he points out that Lord Devlin at one point insists, criticizing John Stuart Mill, that "rulers must be free to act upon what they believe." The direct quote is the following; "What we believe to be evil may indeed be evil and we cannot forever condemn ourselves to inactivity against evil because of the chance that we may by mistake destroy good. For better or for worse the law-maker must act according to his lights."<sup>361</sup> This surely may seem as a contradictory thing for Lord Devlin to write after having argued for the primary importance of social order and cohesion.

How can one claim that the important matter for societies is to have a common belief, not the right belief, and yet discuss the importance of the right-minded person and argue that rulers act upon their individual beliefs? However, as Mitchell navigates Lord Devlin's seeming tension further, he concludes that Lord Devlin is, in fact, not contradicting himself. We agree with that estimation. It seems rather that Lord Devlin is very attentive to the dual criterion for political judgment, both that of truth/right and that of order/cohesion. The primary concern of temporal authorities is their task of securing space for the actualization of potentiality. However, in providing this service to the collectives of truth, they also, inadvertently, and rightly, make a judgment regarding the truth of which they are judging. Balancing the two, pragmatic concerns related to their special task as temporal authorities and the truth of that to which they are reacting constitutes the basis of judgment for temporal authorities.

What has been argued entails that we must reject some of Jürgen Habermas's contentions regarding the proper place of religious and moral reasoning in politics. Not being entirely content with the ideas of John Rawls and Richard Rorty, that religious reason should be excluded from debate and policy, Habermas has carved out a way that weakens limitations on religious expressions. However, this does not mean that the space Habermas carves out is by any understanding great in magnitude. According to Habermas, while religious reasons can be used in public political discussion, they must be filtered, or rather translated, into non-religious speech. Therefore, even though Habermas seems to be making a diplomatic gesture,

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 44–45.

he nevertheless can be found claiming that it is important that citizens must “recognize the principle that political authority is exercised with neutrality towards competing world views. On both these points we must disagree.”<sup>362</sup> We have already described how, while it is true that there is a specific rationale that guides the judgments of temporal authorities, this is not the whole story as they are also to be reactive to specific ideas of love. Habermas does not see the priority of love in the relationship between love and temporal justice. He seems to imagine that the only sufficient criteria of policy are “secular” and that differing ideas of love, differing beliefs, must be translated into the language of “the secular” in order to be acceptable resources in policy.<sup>363</sup> All this registers strangely in light of our arguments.

This thesis does indeed recognize criteria of judgment that pertain only to temporal authorities (secular authorities in Habermas’s vocabulary) and have a generic relationship to love. However, importantly, there is also a secondary, yet necessary, criterion which has its reference to specific ideas of love. If there were only the generic relationship to ideas of love, this would result in, well, nothing. For, if temporal authorities would determine themselves by an equal regard for all forms of love, what shape would the structures of the temporal/secular take? This question is asked to imply and show that the more generic and shapeless a political judgment is, the greater the dissolution of communal structures it threatens to cause. In our view, a charitable interpretation of Habermas would understand his notion of “secular” to be referring to a certain cultural hegemony of certain assumptions that have been described as secular but which include a whole array of concepts and ideas born out of millennia-long cultural experience in the West.<sup>364</sup> The same charitable interpretation would see his notion of “secular translation” to be a necessary acknowledgment of this hegemony by people who find themselves at odds with it.

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<sup>362</sup> Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” *The European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 9.

<sup>363</sup> Habermas has, e.g., written: “The truth content of religious contributions can only enter into the institutionalized practice of deliberation and decision-making if the necessary translation already occurs in the pre-parliamentarian domain, i.e., in the political public sphere itself.” See *ibid.*, 10.

<sup>364</sup> Nigel Biggar has pointed out how any description that would argue that the West is hegemonically non-religious would not be an accurate description of the West. Biggar’s conclusion is that “a genuinely *descriptive* sociology of Western democracies currently does not recommend a political rhetoric that suppresses theology, translating *out* of religious language into non-religious language.” See Nigel Biggar, “Not Translation, but Conversation,” in *Religious Voices in Public Places*, ed. Nigel Biggar and Linda Hogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 171–172.

However true that might be, it is hard to see by what argument Habermas can legitimately place the ethical burden upon Christians and people of other faiths that they must limit their expressions by not uttering that which cannot be directly translated into the hegemonic language of politics in the current age. In terms of a strategy for any given idea of love, Habermas might be right that an idea of love might have the greatest success by seeking a wide appeal in the way it constructs its expressions, for example, in “translating” them. But, other than that, it is difficult to see what it is that gives Habermas the warrant to give such allowances. When Habermas writes that it is important that “every citizen must know and accept that only secular reasons count beyond the institutional threshold that divides the informal public sphere from parliaments, courts, ministries and administrations,” we must, therefore, again, disagree.<sup>365</sup> We have already described how, while it is true that there is a specific rationale that guides the judgments of temporal authorities, this is not the whole story, as they are also to be reactive to love.

### ***i. Is Temporal Justice a Form of Loving Justice?***

Having now explained the dual criterion of political judgment, we can answer questions that may have arisen earlier in the thesis when we had a specific focus on temporal justice. Earlier we did not have all of the tools to answer them but now we should. The question is: Should temporal justice be viewed as a species of justice within the more general category of loving justice? Or to ask more directly: Is temporal justice a type of loving justice?

This is a legitimate question. How else can we describe the motives of representative agents of temporal authorities when they engage in judgment and then determination of temporal authorities? Will it not have to be viewed as a form of love (loving justice)? As we now have presented the dual criterion of temporal authorities for temporal justice we can more easily explain how this is not the case. As the primary criteria for action on the part of temporal authorities is not a specific idea of love, their action cannot be seen as being an act of love, as that is always to be seen as derivate of an idea of love. The fact that the primary criterion for the acts of temporal authorities are not a specific idea of love *does* mean that temporal justice is

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<sup>365</sup> Habermas, “Religion in the Public Sphere,” 9.

not a species of justice within loving justice but a separate phenomenon that still exists in a dynamic with ideas of love.

But how then, someone could legitimately challenge, does the act of judgment performed by temporal authorities (to create space for acts of love and freedom) differ from an act of loving justice performed by private individuals? To ask that same question more directly: How does a law about the funding of education differ in kind from the private donation of a scholarship? The answer is that, while temporal authorities make space for *love*, the private individual engages in loving action in the hope that *freedom* (potentiality) may be actualized. Temporal authorities work with a dual criterion of judgment (holding in view both their role as guarantors of peace, order and space for love *and* the Truth-value of the idea of love under evaluation). Under that condition they then make a judgment regarding truth, for example concerning certain types of education that should be funded. They may surely seem as if they function according to the same criteria as the private donator. But they clearly do not, as their primary rationale for existence is the securing of space in which love can actualize, while a judgment regarding the truth-content of that love is only secondary. For the private person this is not the case. The private individual *primarily* engages in loving actions hoping that doing so may contribute to a future of freedom. Temporal authorities are *primarily* reactive to that love generally, only *secondarily* reactive to it specifically (making truth-judgment), and therefore provide a service for love.

This explanation might beget another question concerning the relationship of temporal justice to love. That is: If political acts are there to make space for loving acts then must not temporal authorities have some notion of what a loving act is and what it is not? Otherwise would they not simply be creating space for acts, loving or otherwise? This question is absolutely on point. And it helpfully brings us back to the aforementioned dual criterion. It is true that temporal authorities will have to make some judgment regarding the truth-content of the form of love under evaluation. But the truth-judgment is a secondary, but necessary, part of the political judgment made by temporal authorities.

Now, with all of this established let us address the concepts of space again, especially suggestive space. Because with the dual criterion we can now have a fuller

view of what the suggestive spaces amount to, how they are not simply negative space, and yet how they escape being over-determining. When agents of temporal authorities make judgments they make them, as has been established, according to a twofold criterion. The first aspect of the criterion regards the general role of temporal justice. The second aspect of the criterion, however, concerns the agents of temporal authorities as moral agents, as the subjects of a specific ideal of love. When agents of temporal authorities make judgments they first hold in view the basic role of temporal authorities in relation to love and, second, their own truth-commitments and their own loves. What takes place in an actual political judgment is that any form of love vying for space will be evaluated by the agent of temporal authorities referring both to the general role of temporal authorities to create space in which love can actualize and the particular judgment that the agent of truth may hold regarding the ideal of love in question.

What ensues is that, while some space will have been granted to the ideal of love in question, its shape and size will have been determined by the agents of temporal authorities making the judgment. This means that the judgments leave a certain imprint, a certain shape, a certain space, that is suggestive as to how it should be interacted with. If, for example, the activity of smoking is legalized, but only in private residences, this is suggestive of how private spaces might be viewed, how smoking might be viewed and how public spaces might be viewed and interacted with. If, on the other hand, as is the case in Japan, smoking is allowed in certain prescribed and marked public areas, this is suggestive, in a slightly different way, of how one might view and interact with smoking and public spaces. This entails that suggestive spaces are not to be viewed as negative spaces. Because they do have a shape, an imprint of the beliefs and loves that jostled for it and were operative in the particular political judgment. That is to say: As temporal authorities make judgments, these judgments accrue to form certain types of spaces which, in being reactive to specific types of love, have a certain shape, a certain suggestibility as to how life might be lived within them. But this shape does not fully determine how one should live or interact within the spaces of temporal justice. To a degree, and to varying degrees, there is a lack of determination of the spaces of temporal justice, which holds open such spaces for other types of engagement or non-engagement. This lack

of determination is secured by the general criteria for the interaction of love and temporal justice drawn out before. The more specific forms of determination, partly reactive to particular forms of love, are guaranteed by the judgment of the agents of temporal authorities. In this the political relevance of this conceptualization of space is apparent.

While the space we are discussing here is not material in the sense that normally pertains to architecture, it is nonetheless real in that it does operate with boundaries, constraints and, simultaneously, an openness and an allowance. It is furthermore clear that spaces receive imprints from the organic activity of the collectives of love combined with the judicious response to them made by the agents of temporal authorities. This is the political process of temporal justice and understanding that process helps us interact with it.

#### **D. A Recapitulation of the Criteria of Interaction**

We already know that love has a relationship to temporal justice which is characterized by temporal justice serving love, both generally and specifically, by creating and sustaining spaces in which love can actualize. What has now been added to this knowledge are certain criteria which help explain it and guide judgment, both for agents of love and for representatives of temporal authorities. We can recapitulate these criteria in the following way: When the representatives of temporal authorities make judgments they do so according to a dual criterion. The primary criterion will be the role of temporal authorities and their *general* relationship to love. The secondary, yet necessary, criterion is the judgment representatives make of *specific* ideas of love. This creates a sequence of judgments which accrue to form certain types of spaces. These spaces will not be negative spaces, which would form if temporal authorities would judge only according to the primary criterion. Neither will the spaces be overly determined positive spaces, which would form if temporal authorities judged only according to the secondary criterion. Rather, through employing the dual criterion, temporal authorities will form spaces that are *suggestive* of how to live and love.

An important question we can ask to determine whether spaces exceed being suggestive is whether there is a possibility for a subjective rejection (inner belief)

followed by some type of speech or action that defies the inner logic of the suggestive structures (expressed belief). And importantly, the internal logic of this thesis is that the actualization of love, not the shaping of temporal justice, is of primary importance. The actualization of love is found with the agents of love and the collective/movement of love, not in the constant, frustrated rearrangement of temporal authorities. Such changes to temporal justice should come as an afterthought.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusions and the Future Trajectory

#### A. Conclusions

At the beginning of the thesis we laid out the problematic that we were going to be addressing. This was the relationship between love and justice in political structures. On our way there we have learned that justice can be analysed into two forms, one being loving justice and the other temporal justice. We therefore found ourselves subsequently inquiring specifically concerning the relationship between love and temporal justice.

We learned that it cannot be argued that love simply becomes temporal justice, insofar as the justice of temporal authorities should be the same as the loving justice Christians proclaim and hope for. Christian love does not, simplistically, become Christian legislation. Neither is there the opposite, a peaceful boundary between love and temporal justice. This is because there is another criterion for the interrelationship between love and justice to be deduced from what has been established here. Temporal justice is the space created that allows love to be actualized. This means that the criteria of the exercise of political judgment for the queen, the statesman or the democratic citizen would be whether she is ready to give Christians, or people of other persuasions, the social space in which to actualize love as they imagine it should be.

Now, according to what has been said, love is surely involved in our temporal governance. But this is not a love that forces others to comply, or share its objects of affection. Love's criterion for engaging with temporal authorities is seeking temporal justice, forms of space that allow love to take form. However, love is most concerned with its own actualization and works on the justice of temporal authorities only when the actualization of love is deemed, by the agents of love, to be hindered in some important way.

Through this dynamic, which can be rather extensive, although never over-determining, the spaces sustained by temporal authorities receive a shape. The spaces will be neither negative nor positive but suggestive spaces. In being judiciously

reactive to ideas and collectives of love, temporal justice takes a shape that is suggestive of how one should live without being over-determining. In this way it always has an indirect relationship to truth in that truth is both reacted to and compromised by the judgments of temporal authorities.

This conclusion means that there is, contrary to the contentions of the realist theologians, a very distinctive form of justice called temporal justice, and that love has a very distinctive vocation in regard to it. It also means that, contrary to the understanding of the radical theologies, there is no hostility between the Christian ideal of love and the concept of temporal justice. It furthermore grants us clearer criteria for understanding the dynamic between love and temporal justice than has been hitherto developed by gradualist political theologies.

## **B. Our way there**

We have reached our conclusions through a simultaneously constructive and critical engagement. We began by addressing the basic questions regarding what type of theological thought would guide our subsequent reasoning. To accomplish this we sought to trace the cognitive effects of the Gospel event. The results of the event for human thought were shown to be radically determining for human subjectivity in that all theological thinking necessarily must find its sole ground in that event. The important result for our objective of political theology was that empirical and natural actualities were deemed not to be part of the properly *theological* part of political theology.

Building upon this foundation we could move towards engaging with the thesis's very central concept of love. There we investigated love in its two forms of eros and agape. We described love as a movement of eros which, when confronted with the Gospel, is transformed into its contrary movement of love, agape. It was nonetheless recognized that despite the differences between the two forms of love they could both be treated under the same signifier "love." Furthermore, love was, importantly, described as a movement towards the actualization of potentiality perceived in faith, which our theology described to be freedom in Christ. This highlighted the distinction between love and that for which it strives,

potentiality/freedom. It was therefore argued that human love is an activity that seeks to create space so that freedom (potentiality) may be actualized.

Following this we wanted to understand and explicate the connection of love to justice. We found that love and justice, in both their divine and human forms, are deeply connected and can well be treated under the same concept of loving justice. But, importantly, the application of the concept of justice was found to work differently in the realm of temporal authorities. This is because of the status of temporal authorities vis-à-vis God's judgment and affirmation. Through investigating the concepts of judgment and affirmation in relation to temporal authorities we learned how the rationale behind temporal authorities evaporates with the coming of the eschaton. Temporal authorities, nonetheless, were shown to have a distinct role in relation to love, the actualization of potentiality. They are the guardians of temporal justice which is found in the creation and sustaining of the space which allows love to actualize.

Throughout this argument rich concepts were employed and explained. We used the conceptual pair of *potentiality* and *actualization*. Potentiality described the perception of the ultimate goal of humanity as perceived in the position of faith (or belief). Actualization described the necessary movement which is set about by this perception. *Space* described the necessary natural and social condition under which actualization can take place free of great hindrance. The concepts of *love* and *justice* were furthermore employed and found to have strong connection to the concepts of potentiality and actuality, in that love and justice are found in actions that seek to create or sustain space for the actualization of potentiality. *Temporal justice* was a concept whose relation to love and justice was found to be subservient in a way similar to the subservient role love and justice have to potentiality. Temporal justice is to be described as the space created and upheld so that love and justice may freely actualize.

Now, as we arrive at the end of the thesis, we understand that love does not become justice by simple translation and that there is not any type of static boundary between the two concepts. Likewise we know that temporal authorities operate with another conception of justice according to their type, and that between the two there is a dynamic relationship wherein temporal justice takes shape according to the

movements of love insofar as temporal justice creates and sustains space in which love can actualize. This space that develops is suggestive space in that it forms in judicial response, first to the general purpose of temporal authorities, and second to the particular expression of love in question. Knowing this helps us better understand and work with the fundamental problematic of the relationship between love and temporal justice. We are, therefore, at the end of this thesis able to speak and act concerning these matters with greater clarity than before.

### **C. The Forward Trajectory – Expanding the Scope**

There is a direction that is implicit in the thesis as it has now been presented although it is a direction that takes us beyond its immediate scope. It points towards and has a possible reference to a very important, although sometimes mute, figure in political theology. This is the figure of the non-Christian neighbour, the one with whom we share so many pivotal things while yet remaining divorced in matters of ultimate importance. How can this thesis be of help in conversations that often take place with that challenging figure? How can a theological conversation concerning faith and politics take place, as we have done in the present thesis, without its being unfruitful in any common conversation between the two figures, Christian and non-Christian? It must be asked whether, if the matter is addressed solely on the grounds of Christian resources (as we have done it here), it need not exclude any possibility of coming together on these important political questions. This tends to be the case for much political theology and implies that these are the right questions to ask but they should, nonetheless, not give rise to despair. The future trajectory of this thesis points towards a bridge and gives hope for mutual ground to be had between the two figures, the Christian and the non-Christian, on these important questions. Up to this point we have offered categories and criteria in our interaction with the content of the Christian faith. These are the categories of love and justice, of love and temporal justice as well as of potentiality, actuality and space. A legitimate question would be to ask how our concepts and solutions will be of use in discussions with non-believers or people of other religious persuasions.

In responding to such a question one could point to an analogy that takes us outside our immediate subject for a brief moment. Alain Badiou is a prominent

French philosopher working on, amongst other things, basic questions of human rationality and the notion of truth. So it was that Badiou developed a very solid notion of truth structured in part around the categories of the Event and the Subject.<sup>366</sup> Some years later, Badiou wrote a book called *Saint Paul and the Foundations of Universalism*.<sup>367</sup> In that book Badiou presents his discovery that the writings of Paul the Apostle are a great illustration of how he understands the relationship between Truth, the Event, and the Subject. Badiou even writes in his *Being and Event* that “all the parameters of the doctrine of the event are thus disposed within Christianity.”<sup>368</sup>

Now, let us imagine that it would have happened the other way around. Let us imagine that Badiou, in contemplating questions of truth, read through Paul’s writings and from there derived his understanding as to how truth functions. And let us keep open the possibility that a Christian could read through Badiou’s work and find in it an excellent way of formulating the Christian relationship to Scriptural Revelation. The Apostle Paul, through his own specifically theological truth procedure, provides the atheist philosopher with an understanding and an inspiration concerning a general account of truth. Such an occurrence provides a model that is both actual and accessible to us. Atheist thinkers can access the writings of Saint Paul and understand how Paul’s way of approaching the event of Christ’s resurrection and his subsequent thinking of that event is a paradigmatic example of how they approach their own notions of truth and event. From something specifically theological, something more widely applicable can be deduced. Widely applicable categories of human thought are teased out in the confrontation with and in the thinking through of God’s revelation. Having found this to be the case let us ask the obvious question. If a thinker of a different persuasion would enter into our specifically theological procedure of thinking about faith and politics, will he not find workable criteria that aid his understanding and match his own way of being and thinking in the world? Will he not discover something generally valid and applicable to his own categories of belief and thought by being attentive to what has been

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<sup>366</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2007).

<sup>367</sup> Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundations of Universalism*, transl. Ray Brassier (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

<sup>368</sup> Badiou, *Being and Event*, 212.

written in the current thesis? To ask this question more directly: Will not the non-Christian find that he has a notion of love and a notion of justice? Will he not realize that he too operates with notions of human potentiality and actuality and will he not then recognize the importance of space for the actualization of his potentiality? Our hope is that by our theological thought procedure we have derived categories that can be appropriated more universally. And we can confidently assume that, on the basis on these concepts and these criteria, we can have a conversation that will be open to the non-Christian without any demand for compromise of core beliefs. It will be free from the demand commonly brought to the Christian that he must translate his concern into the language of secularism. It will, similarly, also be free of the opposite demand on the non-Christian to speak on the terms of Christian confessions.

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## **Regulatory Declaration**

This thesis has been composed by Gretar Gunnarsson and is his own. The work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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Gretar Gunnarsson